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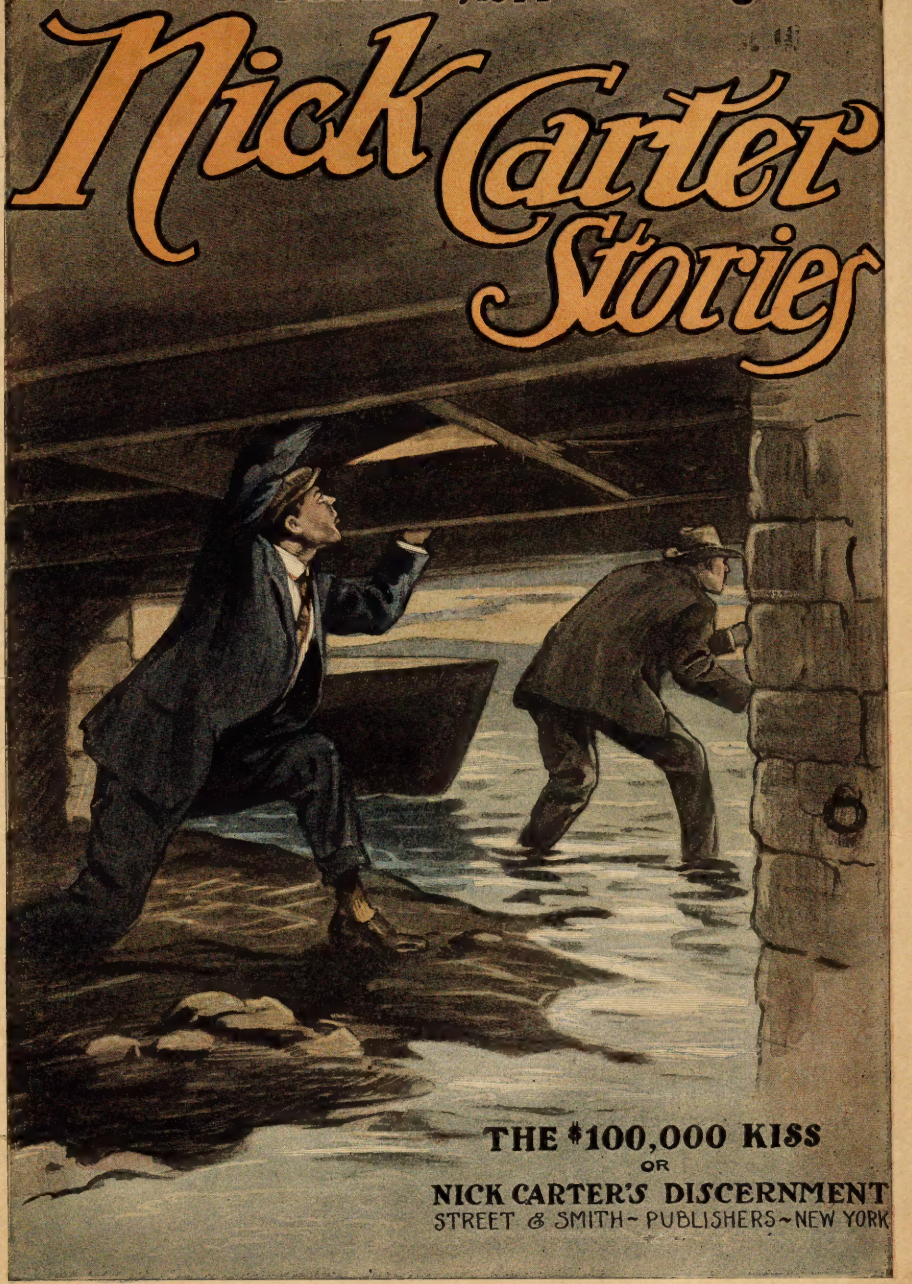
Nick Carter Stories



THE $100,000 KISS
OR
NICK CARTER'S DISCERNMENT

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NICK CARTER STORIES

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THE $100,000 KISS;

Or, NICK CARTER'S DISCERNMENT.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A CALL FROM THE CUSTOMHOUSE.

Pasty Garvan, Nick Carter's assistant, was at the desk in the study of the great detective's Madison Avenue house. He was looking over a card file; therefore, when the phone rang at his elbow, he took down the receiver.

"Yes, this is Mr. Carter's house," he said. "Who is it, please?"

A moment later he told the person at the other end of the wire to hold the line and then put his hand over the transmitter.

"Chief!" he called to Nick who was in the adjoining room. "It's the customhouse. Collector Marshall would like to have you run down there as soon as you conveniently can. What shall I tell them?"

"Say I will be there in an hour if that is satisfactory," Nick answered. "I can go sooner if necessary, but I'd rather not."

Patsy passed on this information, and, after hanging up the receiver, informed the detective that the collector of customs would expect to see him in an hour.

"Evidently they have a hard nut to crack in the smuggling line," young Garvan called out, "and they want to borrow your little hammer. I hope it's a big case with plenty of work to do. We haven't tackled a smuggling proposition for some little time."

Collector Marshall's urgent desire to see the celebrated detective could hardly mean anything else, and Patsy had reason to be somewhat elated, for Uncle Sam has a very thorough system of his own for detecting customs frauds, and catching their perpetrators; consequently it was always something of a compliment when the celebrated private detective's assistance was called for.

Nick, however, was quite used to that sort of thing, and looked upon the request as little more than a routine incident in his busy day.

One of his extensive "stable" of motor cars was at the door half an hour later, and he entered the collector's office in the big customhouse on Bowling Green on time to the minute.

Collector Marshall, an able, alert young man in his middle thirties, greeted Nick cordially as the latter was ushered in.

"I count myself lucky to have got hold of you with so little delay," he said. "I was afraid you'd turn me down."

"Hardly that, Marshall," Nick replied, with a smile. "When Uncle Sam calls on me I always make it a point to respond, no matter if I am already up to my eyes in work. What's in the wind now? Has some covetous American millionaire slipped Buckingham Palace or Westminster Abbey into his coat-tail pocket while Scotland Yard wasn't looking, and brought it over here for a souvenir?"

The collector chuckled.

"No, nothing as simple as that," he answered. "I think we might manage to handle that sort of thing alone. Buskingham Palace would make quite a little bulge in anybody's pocket, you know. The trouble in this case, though, is that we can't find any bulge."

"I suppose not," commented the detective, with a nod, as he seated himself beside the desk, and refused a proffered cigar.

"Well, I suppose you are aching to tell me all about it."

"Something like that," admitted Marshall. "I flatter myself that the New York customhouse has made a pretty good record in the last few years. In doing so, I and my immediate predecessor have made ourselves decidedly unpopular in certain quarters, even in political and so-

ciety circles. We have been accused of being the most heartless of men, and of not caring a rap for the most precious of reputations when we had reason to believe that some highly placed individual, man or woman—usually the latter—had been engaged in the merry game of beating the government out of customs duties. You know all that, though, but you probably don't know as much about the other side of it. We have been very successful, on the whole, in running down such frauds, and in making it hot for those responsible for them, no matter how prominent or otherwise estimable they might be. A few persistent offenders, who are more than usually resourceful, have, on the other hand, continued to elude our utmost vigilance. We have them all spotted pretty thoroughly, and are absolutely convinced of their guilt, but we haven't been able to come down to brass tacks and prove it. I have stood the thing about as long as I care to, and, since my men have thus far failed to turn the trick, I have decided to put it up to you, if you are willing to help out, at least in one instance."

"Of course I will do anything I can." Nick replied readily. "You needn't ask that, whatever particular circumstance you have in mind."

"Thanks, Carter, this is awfully good of you," declared the collector. "I'd like to have handled the whole thing myself, of course, but, failing in that, the man I am after must be brought to account in the best and shortest way possible."

"You have just one individual under suspicion, then?"

"Well, I will give you the main facts and let you judge for yourself. You will understand that this is strictly on the Q. T."

The detective nodded.

"You needn't worry about that," he said quietly.

"I don't," was the answer. "I just said that as a matter of form, of course. Ever heard of a certain William Ashton Simpson?"

"You mean the man who keeps that exclusive art-and-curio store on Fifth Avenue near Thirty-fourth?"

"That's the man," was the answer.

"I've often heard of him," Nick replied. "In fact, I have been in the store quite frequently, and have made some comparatively modest purchases there once or twice. Simpson, or whoever is responsible for the collection of the stock, has unusually good taste, and many of the things displayed are enough to excite the envy of the least susceptible. You don't mean to say that Simpson is a smuggler, do you?"

"That's precisely what I do mean to say," Collector Marshall returned, "and the proofs of that are what I want to go gunning for. Don't worry, though, I haven't any idea that your purchases were originally smuggled into the country, or even that any of his regular stock is tainted in that way."

"Then what do you mean?" the detective asked curiously.

"I am convinced that Simpson's whole business is merely a very elaborate blind, calculated to cover up certain other operations of his which are his chief concern, and the basis of his rapidly increasing wealth."

Nick whistled.

"So that's the idea, is it?" he said. "But good heavens, Marshall, the man has one of the finest stores of that sort in the city, with branches in London and Paris. Apparently he conducts a perfectly legitimate business, and one of the highest class. His art objects and curios are genuine, if I am any judge of such things. It's hard to conceive, if what you say can be true. There are lots of men who have engaged in enterprises of one sort of another, all of them more or less respectable, from no better motives than you ascribe to Simpson, but I never knew of an instance where the business so conducted did not show plenty of evidences of being merely a side line and comparatively unimportant. This one, on the other hand, seems to show that the man behind it is a master in that line, and has put his whole soul into it."

"That's all true enough," agreed the collector. "At least it is my impression, too, and that of every one else whom I have sounded on the subject. That is what makes Simpson's case of much more than ordinary interest—and of corresponding difficulty. Simpson is a cultured man, a thoroughly polished gentleman, as we usually understand that term. He has traveled all over the world. He speaks half a dozen languages, and what he doesn't know about the subjects relating to his business isn't worth knowing. Just as sure as you are living, though, he's a crook underneath it all, and the only reason he hasn't been caught long ago is that he had brought to bear all of his exceptional cleverness in devising means of evading detection."

"You interest me, Marshall," remarked Nick, crossing his legs and thrusting his hands into his pockets.

"I am glad of it," was the reply. "That is what I hoped to do, and it looks to me as if there ought to be enough to interest anybody in this pretty little problem of how to lay William Ashton Simpson by the heels."

CHAPTER II.

A PRETTY PROBLEM.

"Here's the situation in the rough," went on the collector: "Simpson's regular schedule is to make two or three trips abroad every year, aside from an incidental visit across the pond that is supposed to be for pleasure alone. The two or three regular trips I speak of are made ostensibly for the purpose of buying up art objects, and the like, for his store here, and, as a matter of fact, that occupies most of his time. He fell under suspicion two years ago, however, and ever since then we have kept the closest possible watch on him both here and abroad, but we've never been able to trip him.

"In the first place, he apparently has no relations with any of the well-known retail jewelers across the water through whom the usual smuggler can be traced sooner or later by our European agents. We suspect that he deals largely, or exclusively, with a certain firm of Jewish diamond cutters in Amsterdam, but there again we have failed to get it down in black and white. We are similarly in the dark at this end—I mean as to his exact methods of disposing of the loose stones which we are certain he smuggles over to the tune of several hundred thousand dollars' worth a year. We think we have narrowed it down to one individual, and two or three concerns, but we are still working in the dark. However, his 'terminal facilities,' so to speak, are comparatively unimportant either here or abroad. Naturally, if we can determine how he manages to get the stones past our inspectors, and if we can pounce on some of these on his person, or in his baggage, we shall ask nothing more."

Nick smiled.

"That sounds like a modest desire," he commented, "but I take it that you have found it somewhat difficult of realization."

"We certainly have," replied Marshall. "It makes my blood boil whenever I think of the way that fellow has defied us, and kept us guessing. We have searched him as thoroughly as we know how every time he has landed for the last eighteen months, at least. We have stripped him as bare as your hand again and again, and have done about everything except count the threads in his clothes. Not a sign of anything dutiable have we found, however. You can imagine how thoroughly we have ransacked his baggage, and the same thoroughness has been employed in searching his staterooms. My men are past masters at that sort of thing, within their own special field, and I don't see how he could possibly have victimized us so many times!

"At first he took the high-and-mighty attitude, of course, choosing to consider our special activity in his case as an unforgivable insult, and threatened to use his influence and have us all 'broken.' He didn't keep up that pose very long, though, and he's been shrugging his shoulders and tapping his head significantly whenever he sees a customs officer, as if he thought he were a little unbalanced, and that he might as well humor us. His air of bored amusement is more exasperating than any attempted righteous indignation could possibly be, as you may imagine."

"I haven't a doubt of it," said Nick, with a laugh. "Friend Simpson seems to have succeeded in getting under your skin in a very nettling way."

"I'll admit it," the collector agreed ruefully. "He succeeded so well that you can have almost anything you want that isn't nailed down, Carter, if you'll only show him up."

"But you've told me next to nothing to go on," Nick objected. "Boiled down, it only amounts to this—you suspect a certain man who makes frequent trips abroad of being a smuggler of loose diamonds and other precious stones, and you want me to put him on the grill and fry the fat out of him."

"Well, I'm afraid that's about all I can tell you. If I had any real evidence against the fellow I wouldn't be bothering you, you know. There's only one other thing of importance that occurs to me to say: Perhaps you know that about three years ago Simpson married Beatrice Benedict, a comic-opera prima donna. She retired from the stage at the same time of her marriage—it was her third, I believe—and has since been gracing Simpson's town house on East Seventy-third Street, and his modest fifty-thousand-dollar 'cottage' at Southampton, Long Island."

Nick looked surprised.

"I had forgotten that, but I recall it now. Do you have any reason to suppose that she is a party to her husband's smuggling operations?"

Collector Marshall shrugged his shoulders expressively.

"Why not?" he asked. "Doesn't it seem more than likely? She frequently goes abroad with him, even on his regular business trips at times, and we have noticed that when she does not, she is always waiting for him at the dock, and is the first to greet him when he steps down the gangplank."

"Well, that's natural enough, isn't it?" Nick asked, with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Theoretically, yes; but such devotion isn't nearly as common as it is supposed to be, Carter, especially on the part of society women and ex-actresses."

"You think, then, that she may bring in the diamonds on her person when she accompanies him, or that he transfers them to her when she meets him?"

"That is the nearest to a definite suspicion that we have ever had," Marshall replied, "but, like all the rest, it has come to nothing. She has been repeatedly searched by our women inspectors, and given just as thorough an overhauling as has Simpson. We have done that more than once when she has merely met him on his arrival after the affectionate embrace which is always a feature of those occasions; still, nothing doing. You can imagine how much the former star in 'Pinky-Panky' loves us, Carter. She's a very clever woman as well as a very stunning one, and that kind of a woman is always one of the likeliest smuggling suspects, as well as about the hardest kind to convict. She probably served her apprenticeship at the trade when she was on the stage. Many actresses try their hands at it with more or less success. It is almost as fascinating as gambling, and they always want so many pretty things that are impossible even to their big incomes—with duty added—that the temptation is very strong. However that may be, Simpson would be a fool not to take advantage of her coöperation, and I feel fairly certain that he has done so to the full. There you have the story, and practically all the data I can give you."

"I am always thankful for small favors," murmured Nick. "It is reasonable to assume, I suppose, that Simpson is shortly to return from one of his trips, and that you want me to be on hand as one of the reception committee. Am I right?"

"You have guessed it. He's on the *Imperialis*, which is due at five o'clock this afternoon, and, according to wireless reports, ought to be on time. That is why I was so anxious to see you as soon as possible."

"Is the fair Beatrice with him?"

"Not this time. The fair Beatrice will doubtless be the most important member of the reception committee, however."

"Then I accept with pleasure," declared Nick.

"Good! Now we ought to get action. I am sure you can find the weak spot in their armor, if there's one to find. Of course, my suspicions may not be worth the breath it has taken to express them, but I don't think you'll find that to be the case. I haven't held down this job as long as I have without learning a thing or two, and if William Ashton Simpson isn't a dyed-in-the-wool smuggler, I shall be tempted to inform the president that I think somebody else should be drawing down my little twelve thousand a year. Just one thing more: Searching that precious pair has come to be a decidedly embarassing business even for us hardened offenders in that line. Therefore, unless you feel pretty sure that you have discovered something very much out of the way, I hardly think that we shall make any more than the routine search of their baggage. It would hardly be worth while. I am sure my men have exhausted all the ordinary possibilities, and every other that our combined brains have been able to think of. I can't help feeling that something decidedly interesting happens when those two people fall on each other's necks, but I'll be hanged if I can guess what it is! I'm hoping you may be able to solve

the puzzle. We have even had Mrs. Simpson take her hair down and have it combed out by one of our women inspectors, thinking that he might have slipped some stones into it when he put his arm around her. That will give you some idea of the lengths to which we have gone, and ought to show that, unless we can do something extraordinary in this case, we had better not attempt anything. For if we do we'll have the humiliation of another defeat, as sure as fate."

The detective smiled broadly as he got up.

"It strikes me, Marshall," he said, "that you have already done about everything short of turning those two people inside out. If you expect me to find a way of doing that I'm afraid I shall have to disappoint you. It has never been done very successfully, so far as I know. However, if anything else can bring about the desired result, I hope I shall not disappoint your childlike faith in me."

CHAPTER III.

A LONG-DRAWN-OUT KISS.

Thanks to Signor G. Marconi, Nick Carter was able to keep in touch with the progress up the Ambrose Channel of the North Atlantic Steamship Company's flagship, the *Imperialis*. Thus he planned so that he wasted no time at the dock, and yet was there in good season for the landing.

Collector of Customs Marshall was on hand in person, owing to the importance of the occasion, and Customs Inspectors Creidler, Lightfoot, and Macy—the latter a woman—had been assigned to the task of searching Simpson and his beautiful wife in case the detective felt justified in taking that course.

The huge *Imperialis* at length forged majestically through the Narrows, past the Statue of Liberty, and neared her dock not very far from the customhouse. To the uninitiated it would have seemed an impossible task to warp that fifty thousand tons and nine hundred feet of length into the dock, but the company's tugs managed it with surprising ease, and in a comparatively short time.

The gangplanks were then run out, and the first-class passengers streamed ashore, where they were awaited by keen-eyed customs inspectors and a goodly crowd of friends.

Chick Carter, Nick's senior assistant, was there with the detective; and Mrs. Simpson had been pointed out to them a few minutes before.

She was indeed a charming-looking woman, a trifle above medium height, beautifully formed, neither too slender nor too stout, with a great mass of soft, chestnut hair, long, silken lashes over hazel eyes, and features that artists had often raved over.

There was something not altogether pleasing, to be sure, about her expression. It was noticeably a little arrogant, but that is altogether too frequently the case with such women, and did not justify any great criticism of her.

The little group of detectives and customs men noticed her face light up as the vessel glided slowly into its berth, and, following the direction of her gaze, saw William Ashton Simpson leaning over the rail and waving his hat to her.

It seemed to be a truly affectionate greeting on both sides, and it was hard to believe that anything sinister lay beneath her presence there. That remained to be seen, however, and Nick never allowed mere sentimentality to blind him in the face of such a situation.

The art dealer was one of the first to set foot on the pier, and his wife had edged as close as she could get, the detectives and their official companions having unobtrusively grouped themselves about her. Simpson had a light overcoat over one arm, and a club bag in the other.

As he approached his wife with a look of genuine welcome in his eyes, he dropped his impedimenta carelessly at his side, pulled off his soft felt hat, and, holding it in his right hand; threw his arms around his wife and hugged her as unaffectedly as if they had been alone on a desert island. Indeed, the two seemed unconscious that scores of eyes were upon them, least of all that they were under official observation, and that every move they made was being subjected to the most suspicious scrutiny.

A long, fervent kiss followed—something like the kind that was called a "Nethersole kiss" a few years ago, having been named in honor of the osculatory performances of a well-known English actress.

Collector Marshall and his three inspectors made no move, and watched the scene with more or less impassivity. They had seen such greetings often enough, and had never succeeded in getting any nourishment out of them; therefore they did not feel called upon to take any very active interest in this one, unless Nick gave them a signal.

Carter and his assistant had placed themselves on opposite sides of the pair, so that they could watch proceedings from different angles. They did so with all their eyes, nor were their ears idle.

They were near enough to hear every word even every murmur of those greetings which seems too unstudied, intimate, and loving for alien ears, yet which duty compelled them to listen to.

It was not the words which interested them, however, but rather the actions of the two. These they studied and dissected with glances that were as keen and sure as a surgeon's scalpel.

The long embrace was presently over, and Simpson and his wife separated, at least to the extent that he picked up his neglected bag and overcoat with one hand, while his wife clung to his other arm. In this fashion they started to move away.

For the last few moments Collector Marshall had been narrowly watching Nick instead of the suspected pair. During the later stages of the embrace the collector had shown signs of anxiety and disappointment as he failed to see any indication that the detective was about to take action. When the two started to move away, Marshall gave a little gesture of resignation, as if he had resigned himself to the thought that it was over, and that they should have to wait for months for Simpson's next return from abroad before they could put the thing to the test again.

Simpson and his wife had not taken two steps, however, toward the place where their baggage was to be searched in the routine way, before Nick looked significantly at the collector, raised one finger, and gave a little nod.

Marshall's face and those of his subordinates changed instantly, and the collector quickly stepped in front of the Simpsons.

"Pardon me, Mr. Simpson," he said courteously, "but we are not discouraged yet. I think we shall have to go

through the motions of searching you and your wife at least once more before we can finally lay the ghost of our suspicions in regard to you. Will you kindly come this way?"

The two had stopped abruptly at his first words. Now the art dealer looked at Marshall with a quizzical, humorously bored expression and shrugged his shoulders, then glanced at his wife and smiled.

"Buck up, little woman," he said to her. "These very persistent gentlemen unfortunately enjoy Uncle Sam's license to make themselves as obnoxious as they know how, and we, as good citizens, have nothing to do but to submit."

He turned a resigned glance on Marshall.

"It sounds good, collector, to hear you hint that this may be the last amusement of this sort to be indulged in at our expense, but I had hoped that there would be no more at all. Surely there must be some limit to the lengths to which even you can properly go, and I should have thought that it had been reached some time ago. You may not realize it, but I have really been a very long-suffering person. I would not for a moment suggest that the customhouse has had any sinister motive in its treatment of my wife and myself, but your persistence begins to look painfully like persecution. I have already taken the matter up with the secretary of the treasury, and as yet, unfortunately, I have received little satisfaction. After this, however, I shall certainly do so again, and, I hope, with better success. I am afraid, my dear sir, that your zeal has carried you away—to put as kindly an interpretation upon it as possible."

"You may put any interpretation you please upon it," the collector answered shortly. "You may also complain to the treasury department as often as you care to. I am here to do my duty as I see it, and that duty is going to be done."

The whole party had moved on, meanwhile, the inspectors and detectives having cleverly surrounded the pair as they moved through the crowded pier shed, in order to guard against the possibility of either of the suspects passing anything to a confederate.

A few steps more brought them to a couple of rooms such as are set apart for the search of suspected smugglers. Collector Marshall looked at Nick for guidance, and the latter stepped forward.

"I hardly think it will be necessary for your woman inspector to search Mrs. Simpson privately, Marshall," he said. "One of these rooms ought to do for all of us, and I trust we shall not embarrass the lady too much by the little we shall ask her to do."

Apparently Simpson recognized the detective for the first time, and at Nick's words he flushed angrily.

"This is the last straw!" he exclaimed. "Haven't we been submitted to indignities enough without having an outside professional thief catcher turned loose on us in this fashion? I shall certainly resist any sort of a search of my wife in the presence of Carter or of any other man, and I stand well within my rights in doing so. It is unheard of!"

"Those who play with fire must expect to burn their fingers sooner or later," the detective returned imperturbably. "I regret the present necessity, I assure you, but the responsibility lies primarily with you; not with us. I think I have seen through your game, my friend, and if you choose to use your wife as an accomplice in your smuggling operations, you haven't the shadow of a right to expect that she will be spared what you are pleased to call the 'indignity' of a search."

"You are going too far, Carter!" stormed the art dealer. "You have no grounds for any such accusations. I have stood this sort of thing for some time because I still retain a sneaking respect for the authority of the government, but I must protest against the interference of a private detective."

"Protest and be hanged!" put in the collector. "Mr. Carter is acting at my urgent request, and therefore he is temporarily in government employ."

"What if he is!" demanded Simpson, changing his ground. "That doesn't warrant him in going contrary to your rules, does it, and insisting that he shall search Mrs. Simpson in the presence of the whole of you? If she must be searched, let a woman inspector do it, as usual."

His wife had remained silent up to this time, but now she spoke up indignantly.

"I don't care what you want to do!" she cried. "I shall never submit to any such outrage, and if you persist you will be held up to the scorn of every gentleman."

Nick smiled quietly.

"I am afraid you are given to exaggeration, Mrs. Simpson," he said. "I am quite capable of being my own judge as to the rules which govern a gentleman, and this is all a tempest in a teapot. You don't know what the proposed search is to consist of, and the very fact that you and your husband have waxed so warm on the subject is an evidence that you are afraid of the consequences. As for the rest, I can assure you that you voluntarily cheapened yourself on the stage far more than any one would think of asking you to do here."

The shot went home, and Beatrice Simpson found herself at a loss for words.

Nick Carter opened the door of the private room and bowed ceremoniously.

"Will you kindly step in here—and you, too, Simpson—and let us hear no more about insulted dignity or modesty?" he said.

CHAPTER IV.

STRANGE NOOKS FOR SMUGGLED STONES.

Simpson and his wife reluctantly obeyed the detective's command, and Chick, Collector Marshall, and the three inspectors followed them into the room.

Nick's assistant constantly kept his eyes on the pair, and in a moment Nick had closed the door and confronted them.

"Now, Mrs. Simpson," he said, "you are first, and I have decided to make a concession to your very sensitive feeling—not just yet, however. First, I am going to ask you to clasp your hands behind you, and I am going to remind you that you have doubtless often submitted to examination at the hands of a man dentist without feeling it necessary to blush."

Those about him started slightly at his words, and the corners of the great detective's mouth twitched as he caught a startled look in Mrs. Simpson's eyes, and saw them quiver and almost fall before his significant gaze.

"Now put your head back and open your mouth—open it wide, please," he went on, stepping close to her, and putting his left hand under her chin.

Simultaneously, to the amazement of all, even to his

assistant, there appeared in his right hand a familiar little dentist's mirror, set on a long, slender handle. Evidently he had been prepared for just what he believed he had discovered, although he could not have been sure of it in advance. He was probably prepared for other contingencies as well, for that was his way.

"I shall do nothing of the kind!" the woman declared, with flashing eyes, and well-shod feet tapping the floor. "Will, you're not going to let them——"

"Certainly not!" vowed her husband, shouldering his way forward with clenched fists. "This has got to stop, Carter! I won't have it! I'll——"

Collector Marshall made a sign to the two male inspectors, and they seized the art dealer none too gently and thrust him forcibly back.

"Shut your trap!" one of them growled.

And Simpson shut it. Evidently he wisely decided that resistance was useless under the circumstances, and remained trembling and fuming in the grasp of the two inspectors, while Nick went on relentlessly with his disagreeable task.

The woman had locked her jaws tight, and was looking at the detective defiantly.

"Are you going to compel me to use force, Mrs. Simpson?" he asked quietly.

She naturally did not reply, but her jaws failed to relax. Nick shrugged his shoulders.

"Just as you please," he said, and with that he applied a seemingly slight pressure just where it would do the most good. With astonishing suddenness the beautiful chin dropped and the red lips parted.

"You brought it on yourself," he told her.

The miniature mirror went into her mouth in a twinkling, and with it a little curved steel probe, which the others also recognized as a part of the usual dentist's equipment.

"Ah!" Nick murmured, with satisfaction a moment later. I thought so!"

Chick, Collector Marshall, and the woman inspector leaned forward curiously. A few deft manipulations of the probe followed, then Carter pressed a little on Beatrice Simpson's white throat, and, whipping out his handkerchief, held it in his right hand.

"In order to try my best to live up to your conception of a gentleman, Mrs. Simpson," he said sarcastically, "I shall ask you to favor me by ejecting those stones instead of spitting them out."

The woman's face just then was more like that of a tragic actress than of a former comic-opera queen. Something dropped into Nick's handkerchief after a moment's delay.

"Thank you," the detective said, glancing down. "That accounts for all there, I think—except the one you swallowed!"

"Swallowed!" echoed the collector.

"Exactly!" replied Nick, releasing the woman's throat, and rubbing his treasure-trove with his handkerchief before he passed them over to Marshall. "Here is a ruby and two diamonds—as fine specimens of their size as I have ever seen. They must be worth a pretty penny, but unfortunately the modest and shrinking Mrs. Simpson swallowed another gem—perhaps more than one—when she saw how things were going, and before I had time to prevent her. I caught her in the act, and perhaps you noticed that before I loosened these I took pains to prevent her disposing of them in the same way."

"But I don't understand——" began the collector.

"Didn't that kiss strike you as a little too prolonged in the case of a man and his wife after three years of marriage?" inquired Nick, his smile returning. "It was very pretty, of course, and it seemed quite romantic, but it looked just a little queer to me, and I chanced to see that it was accompanied by some rather unusual movements of the lips."

Marshall looked incredulous, and rather disgusted.

"Do you mean to tell me," he demanded, "that these stones passed from his mouth to hers at that time?"

"That's precisely the idea," was the calm response. "All in the family, you know. Lovers don't mind such things, they tell me, although it would hardly appeal to me. We'll have to give this ingenious pair credit for putting up something rather novel in the way of a smuggling device."

"Well, I'll be—hanged!" remarked the collector of customs. "It sounds as easy as rolling off a log, Carter, but I'm afraid we would never have thought of it in a month of Sundays. Why did you have to probe for these, though?"

"Oh, it was a necessary part of the trick that there should be some provision for holding the stones in place in the mouth and out of the way. Otherwise, you see, they might have embarrassed the lady when she tried to talk. She has no less than four capacious holes in her back teeth, doubtless maintained for the purpose, with a bit of some adhesive substance in each of them. All that was necessary for her to do was to roll the stones into place with a few, quick movements of her tongue, and after that they were held there in those sticky cavities; the other one was empty when I looked. That swallowing motion of her throat a little while before accounts for the absence of the fourth stone—for there were four at least. Probably she had not succeeded in getting it to stay where she put it, and when I mentioned the word 'dentist' to her she took the alarm and swallowed it, hoping that I would not discover the rest. I might not have done so, either, if I hadn't provided myself with the necessary instruments, for the stones were quite snugly hidden. If you care to have an X-ray photograph taken, I have no doubt you can locate the missing loot in her stomach, but it won't do you much good. I would hardly advise an operation for it."

"Of course not," murmured the collector. "These are all we need to put these elusive individuals where they belong, and I am everlastingly in your debt, Carter."

"I won't press for payment," the detective returned lightly. "I am not quite through with Mrs. Simpson yet, however," he continued, turning to the woman again, and surprising another startled look in her eyes.

"You're not?" questioned Marshall. "You think she has others about her?"

"I imagine so. We'll have a look, anyway, and this time we'll grant the lady's request to the extent of turning her over to the tender mercies of Inspector Macy. Mrs. Macy, will you kindly remove Mrs. Simpson's hat, and take down her hair?"

The fair smuggler paled and shrank back, while her husband, muttering something inarticulate, made a move as if to break away from his two captors.

"Not—not here!" pleaded the woman. "Haven't you badgered me enough without——"

Nick shook his head sternly.

"Enough of that!" he interrupted. "I see no reason for

you to be ashamed of your hair, Mrs. Simpson, and it is a little too late in the day to be ashamed of whatever it may conceal."

"But her hair has been searched before, Carter," the collector put in. "We have never found anything."

"All the more reason why we should search it again," replied Nick. "They would have reasoned that it was safe now, for, after your repeated failures, it wasn't likely that she would be forced to take it down again. Simpson's hand pressed the back of her hair under his hat while his arm was about her, and I suspected then that we should find something there. Now I know it. The lady's expressive eyes have just given it away."

Despite all protests, the woman inspector went to work in a businesslike way. Mrs. Simpson's expensive Paris hat was laid aside, and the shining, heavy mass of chestnut hair was laid hold of.

Instead of taking it down at first, however, the inspector's capable fingers explored it just as it was.

"I've found it!" she exulted presently, and drew out a tiny receptacle of silk in shape that was not unlike a miniature wastebasket, and the silk covering was held in shape with milliners' wires. The inside was filled with silk floss, with here and there a deep little depression.

In these depressions were several more stones of the first water, half concealed by the soft, enveloping floss.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Marshall. "Here is a haul indeed! I didn't look for any such luck as this! These stones are magnificent, and of great value. I shouldn't be surprised if the whole lot proved to be pretty close to a hundred thousand dollars. It is their flawless perfection rather than their size that makes them so valuable. What I don't understand, though, is how they got here. It's easy enough to see how this little affair could be concealed and held in place by the coils of her hair; but in order to have placed them in it, Simpson must have been carrying them in his hand when he disembarked, and that is almost too foolhardy for belief, especially as they must have been loose. He might have dropped a fortune as easily as not, or found himself obliged to shake hands with somebody—or something of that sort."

"We are coming to Simpson himself in a moment," Nick returned. "When we do I think it will be easy enough for you to see the whole clever arrangement."

CHAPTER V.

THE ARTIFICIAL FINGER.

At Nick's request, Mrs. Macy took out the many pins from the former opera singer's hair, and let down the long, rich tresses, much to their owner's chagrin.

The detective did not expect anything more to be found among them, but he wished to make sure. No further stones came to light, and Mrs. Simpson was permitted to retire to the next room, in company with the woman inspector, to repair the damage.

"Keep two eyes on her, though," Nick cautioned Mrs. Macy. "Don't give her even an inch of rope. If you do you may find her among the missing. If she tries any tricks, call us."

He then sauntered over to the art dealer's corner, where Simpson was still sitting between the two inspectors, whose hands were on his shoulders. To the surprise of those about, the detective held out his hand to the man as if offering to shake hands with him. Simpson looked as puzzled as the rest, but made no move to take the hand.

"Now what do you want?" he asked gruffly. "You caught us and confiscated the stones. You ought to be satisfied with that!"

"Perhaps I ought to be," Nick returned, with a curious expression. "I don't expect to find any more undeclared gems, Simpson, but I am always interested in finding out all I can about the methods of such gentry as you. I am waiting for you to give me your hand."

"I don't know what your game is," muttered the man, "but I suppose I'll have to submit. Here."

With that he held out his left hand.

"No, your right, please," insisted Nick.

Simpson scowled blackly and bit his lips; then, after hesitating a few moments, he put out the hand indicated.

Nick grasped the smuggler's right wrist firmly, and beckoned to the collector, turning the hand palm upward as he did so.

"If you will look closely, Marshall," he said, "you will see that this third finger is artificial. I knew that long ago, and when I saw the way he managed his hat, holding the brim between his first and second fingers when his hand was pressed against the back of his wife's head a while ago, I came to the conclusion that something was happening in connection with this artificial finger and the thumb that he would otherwise have naturally used in holding his hat."

The collector looked closely at the finger to which Nick pointed, and then turned a blank gaze on the detective.

"I can't keep up with you, Carter," he complained. "I see now that the finger is artificial, all right, although I never would have known it if you hadn't called my attention to it. It's a wonderful piece of work, and I never knew before that a human finger could be imitated so perfectly, joints, nail, and all. That doesn't help me to understand what you're talking about, though, nor what you mean when you say that you knew of the artificial finger long ago. You didn't give me any idea that you had previously suspected this fellow."

"I hadn't had the slightest suspicion of him," Nick returned promptly. "I use my eyes, though, and I had some conversation with Simpson the first time I was ever in his store. I noticed then that he managed that finger a little awkwardly, and guessed why. His own finger has been severed close to the hand at some time, and he has had this made. There are plenty of them like it—in most particulars, at any rate. I have a notion that this one is unique, though, in some respects." While he was talking he had bent closer over Simpson's hand, and felt about the base of the artificial finger.

"Ah, here we are!" he murmured presently, giving the finger a slight pressure at a certain spot with his thumb.

He had previously touched a spring, for a little hole instantly appeared.

"That explains how he carried the gems without any fear of losing them, or of their being found in his hand," he declared, with quiet satisfaction. "They were not only in his hand, but actually in his finger, you see. This artificial finger is hollow, and offered storage room for a very tidy fortune in unmounted gems. All he had to do was to place them in it in Europe, and laugh at all your attempts to search his cabin. Then, when he wanted to empty them out—into his wife's hair, for instance—it was an easy

matter to bury this finger in her hair, press the spring with his thumb, and empty the contents into the other hiding place awaiting them there."

"But why the dickens should he have gone to that risk?" demanded Marshall. "He could just as well have kept all the stones in this confounded finger without any one being the wiser if you hadn't come along."

"That would seem to be true," returned Carter, "but you will notice that the finger is only hollow as far as the first joint, counting from the hand. The space, therefore, is limited, and I imagine that our friend here was trying to get rich too fast, and was bringing over more stones than he could accommodate in that way. Or, again, it may merely be that he and his charming wife had become so enamored of playing the game of 'Gem, gem, who's got the gem?' with you that they have added some little frills for their own amusement, just to see how much they could put over under your very noses. Now we know that he had some stones in his mouth to-day, and that he must have transferred the rest from this finger to Mrs. Simpson's hair, and that is about all we need to know, isn't it?"

"It certainly is," Marshall rejoined, looking admiringly at the detective. "I don't believe you ever did a much cleverer piece of work, of its kind, than this, Carter," he continued. "It's good enough for me, at any rate, and you can be sure I won't soon forget it! Now we'll have this wily gentleman's baggage examined in the ordinary way, just for the sake of thoroughness, and then we'll march the two of them off. I suggest that you communicate with your lawyer, Simpson; you'll need him. You will be released on bail, of course—more's the pity! But some surety company will have to put up about twenty-five thousand for each of you, I imagine, before the judge will let you off. And I think I see your finish. You've played tag a long time with us without getting caught, but Carter has done it with ridiculous ease, and I don't believe you'll have much chance to trouble us further."

"Oh, crow away while you have the chance!" the smuggler retorted, glaring at those about him. "Every dog has his day, you know, and I suppose your day had to come sooner or later, but this never would have happened if it hadn't been for this beastly detective. I never expected to have him rung in on me, but I can tell you people, right now, that you may not find it all such plain sailing as you seem to think it will be. Maybe I won't do any more smuggling for some time, but I'll find some way of repaying you with interest—just remember that! I have a card or two up my sleeve, yet, and the next trick's going to be mine!"

"Take it then—if you can," the detective said, with amused tolerance. "We've heard that sort of talk a number of times before, Simpson, and we know about how much it's worth. If you really mean anything by it you are a fool to blurt it out, and if you don't—well, it's six in one hand and half a dozen in the other. Go as far as you like! I think we shall manage to survive."

CHAPTER VI.

A NOVEL TRAP FOR NICK.

Several days had passed without any unlooked-for developments. It seemed as if Nick Carter's connection with the Simpson smuggling case had begun and ended all within a very few hours.

Indeed, that was Nick own impression. The incident certainly seemed practically closed so far as he was concerned. He had caught Simpson and his wife, two of the persons who had been giving New York's collector of customs the most trouble, and it was natural to suppose that that was the end of that matter.

As Marshall had prophesied, the smugglers had been released, as is the custom in such cases, their bail being fixed at twenty-five thousand dollars each. Enthusiastic over the detective's success, Collector Marshall had secured Nick's promise to take a hand in two or three similar investigations, but there was no immediate work to be done along those lines. The collector, however, did not altogether share Carter's confidence that the Simpsons' fangs had been drawn, and was inclined to give considerable weight to the smuggler's threats.

"I don't believe those people have been working alone, Carter," he had declared. I have a more or less vague idea, and have had for some time, that there is a sort of smuggler's syndicate at work with a widespread organization not only here in New York, but in other parts of the country. For all we know the Simpsons may be connected with it—may, in fact, be the leading spirits in it. For that matter, it wouldn't be surprising if it should turn out that the others whom I want to tackle when the next opportunity offers are also members of the group. I haven't any definite proof of its existence, of course, but I think I can feel it in the air. If it exists in any form you mustn't think you have heard the last of this business, and I mustn't, either. I can hardly believe that a man like Simpson would have indulged in any such threats unless they meant something, and if they do, they must mean that he has not only a distributing organization behind him for the disposal of the gems he has been bringing over, but also a fighting organization—or one that can easily be converted into that."

"Well, what if he has?" Nick had replied. "I can't do anything until they show their hand. You may be right; I wouldn't venture to say that you are not, although it strikes me that Simpson was just working his exhaust, and getting rid of some superheated air. He isn't the sort of man I could ordinarily suspect of being at the head of a gang, or connected with one in any way. You never can tell, though. I have often established such facts about the most likable people. If you are right, and that is the case with Simpson, he certainly has an excellent opportunity to use his system to stir up people."

The collector nodded soberly.

"That's what I don't like about it," he declared. "Personally my feeling has always been that professional smugglers like Simpson and his wife should not be admitted to bail, whatever is done with the society women and others who take a whirl at the game now and then."

"Well, it's the custom, and it can't be helped. I'll keep my eyes open, of course, Marshall, but I really don't look for any trouble. Simpson is in a very delicate position, out on bail as he is, and facing a trial that cannot fail to go against him. As I told him when he made the threats, he would be the biggest kind of fool to try to carry them out under such circumstances, for any such attempt, no matter how it was cloaked, would be sure to react on him, and tend to increase his sentence. He's a man of education, and he ought to know what he's up against."

"That is true, but you must remember that we have dealt a crushing blow to his position and previous show of

respectability," objected the collector. "He knows he can't fight this charge successfully, and that his days of prosperity and immunity are over. He isn't one to tamely submit to that, unless I am very much mistaken, and he hasn't a great deal to lose now. Would it be so very strange, therefore, if he should try to get his revenge, especially if he has criminal connections that would enable the thing to be done, with a fair chance of its being unlikely that it could be traced to him?"

"I suppose not," admitted the detective. "There may be something in that. I'll keep it in my mind and be on my guard—but I am always in that state now so far as I find it possible to be without impairing my usefulness. After all, however, Nick Carter is only human. There are many ways by which clever rascals can deceive the most skillful and cautious servants of the law, at least long enough to serve their immediate purposes."

One day, during the latter part of the week, Danny, Nick Carter's "Old Reliability," chauffeur, was off duty, owing to an attack of the grippe, and his place was taken by the second chauffeur, a young man who had recently been employed to assist Danny. He drove one of the smaller cars when the big touring car was out, and made himself generally useful about the garage.

His record had been examined into closely by the detective, and Nick had decided that he was a good, steady-going, dependable fellow. So he was—and is—but his presence on Nick's car that day paved the way for something that would hardly have been attempted if Danny had been at the wheel, and would have been likely to fail if it had been attempted.

The new chauffeur—Ben Libbey by name—had brought the detective's sixty-horse-power limousine around at Nick's order, and had taken his employer to one of the new model tenements on East Seventy-seventh Street, near the East River, where the detective wished to make some inquiries. The young man was an experienced driver, and all went well. Nick left him in front of the building and went about his business.

He was gone about twenty minutes, and, when he hurried back to the closed car, he stopped with one foot on the step long enough to fling another address to the driver; then stepped in, slammed the door behind him, and sat down on the rear seat, as was his custom.

He had been walking rapidly, because he was late for another appointment, and therefore he subsided rather heavily into the seat. To his consternation it gave way under him as if the cushions had been suspended above thin air.

Simultaneously the lower part of the back of the seat swung away, and before the detective could grasp anything to stop himself, he plunged in a crumpled heap in the space under and behind the seat, his outstretched hands clawing uselessly at the slippery leather cushions.

Incidentally, he was conscious, that, by some mysterious means, the curtains had been drawn over the glass in the door and in the front of the car, thus shutting off his view of the chauffeur, and preventing passers-by from seeing his plight.

He was still apparently alone, and could have sworn that human hands had not touched the curtains. While he was still in the act of falling, with his feet elevated over the front edge of the seat, which alone seemed to have remained firm, his active brain found time to speculate over this astounding happening.

How was it possible for his own car to play him false in this extraordinary way? Had the new chauffeur been tampering with it? Was Ben Libbey in league with some of his many enemies? He did not believe that possible, for he had never been deceived in a man whom he had investigated as thoroughly as he had Libbey. Moreover, Danny had only been incapacitated since the day before, and that would hardly have given Ben a chance to make such changes in the car as this amazing tumble suggested.

In a flash it came to him that this might not be his own car, after all, and that the man who was driving it—it had already shot away from the curb with reckless speed—might not be Ben Libbey.

It would have been possible for somebody to have stepped in beside the new chauffeur, and, pressing a concealed weapon against his side, have ordered him to drive away during the detective's absence. Such things had been done by the gunmen of New York more than once without any one in the neighborhood being the wiser. After that, another car, outwardly the duplicate of Nick's, could have been driven up without much danger, that the detective, in his hurry, would suspect that a substitution had taken place.

All this shot through Nick's mind before he had more than touched the bottom of the car. A moment later, while he was scrambling desperately to get out of his awkward situation, he met with another and even more unwelcome surprise. He was startled into temporary immobility at a slight sound inside the closed and curtained car, which could not be traced to any of his own movements. Then before he could clamber out of the hole, or even remove his feet from their elevated position, a masked face appeared above him, and a gloved hand, holding an automatic pistol, came into view.

The intruder must have been hidden under the seat when the detective had entered, and if that was the case, the front seat, too, must have been made over in an unusual way.

"Confess your surprise for once, Carter," came a disguised voice, while the masked man's lips twisted into a quizzical grin. "Don't make a sound! It wouldn't be good for your health, I assure you." Nick had had occasion often enough to find that discretion is indeed the better part of valor, and in his present defenseless state, with that deadly little weapon covering him steadily, it would have been suicide to make the slightest false move.

"You seem to have taken me at a slight disadvantage, whoever you are," he said quietly, his eyes looking up unflinchingly between his elevated, outstretched feet. "Excuse me if I don't rise, won't you? And now will you kindly tell me what you want?"

"What I've got—you," was the answer. "Under other circumstances I might like to chin with you, Carter. They say you are hard to beat at the conversational game, but I always make it a point to put business before pleasure, therefore, I am afraid I shall have to cut your remarks short."

With that, he shifted his weapon to his left hand, put his right into his pocket, and brought out what the detective immediately recognized to be a hypodermic needle.

Nick's muscles stiffened at the sight of that sinister little instrument. Come what would, he did not intend to be drugged in that way, if he could help it. To be sure, his position could hardly have been more ill suited to effective resistance, for he was lying on his back on the

floor of the car, his head partly under the back of the seat, and his feet elevated at nearly right angles to the rest of his body. Nevertheless he did what he could, careless now of consequences.

The man was leaning over the front of the collapsed seat, and a little to Nick's right, therefore, the detective, suddenly drew back his right leg, and, putting all the strength into it that he could bring to bear, delivered the only kind of a kick that was possible.

He aimed at the hand that held the hypodermic needle, hoping to put that instrument out of commission, at any rate.

His masked enemy drew back swiftly, though, and evaded the blow of the stout sole, then, ducking, threw his arms around Nick's ankles, and, by main force, dragged the detective's knees down over the edge of the seat and held them there so firmly that Nick could hardly move them.

Realizing that there was nothing more to hope for in that direction, Nick furtively drew his own automatic, and, pointing it upward, waited for a moment in the hope that his assailant would show himself over the edge of the seat. The other was evidently too wily to do that for the moment, and Nick knew, only too well, what he might expect.

Consequently, he lost no time in shifting the weapon a little to the right. In that position he fired it point-blank at the right-hand door, penetrating the drawn curtain and demolishing the plate glass. Another shot, and another, followed in quick succession. Two more holes appeared in the dark shade, and two more bullets sang through the jagged hole in the glass.

Nick was firing to attract attention, in the hope that the limousine would be brought to a stop by the police.

He had only time to fire three shots. In the intervals between the reports he heard his assailant cursing him fervently, and then, before he could fire for the fourth time, he felt a stinging pain on the fleshy part of his left calf.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SOUTH AMERICAN POISON.

There was no room for doubt as to what had happened. The masked man had thrust the hypodermic needle into Nick Carter's leg, and had driven the plunger home, injecting whatever drug the thing had been charged with.

Still Nick did not feel any ill effects for a moment, and was about to fire again when his legs were unexpectedly released and thrust inward so forcibly to one side that he found himself overbalanced, and doubled up before he knew what was happening.

He was thrown over on his right side by the maneuver, and his aim was thus deranged. Before he could get the weapon into position to fire again, the masked face had once more appeared over the edge of the seat, and he was again covered by the man's revolver.

"I wouldn't try any more target practice if I were you, Carter," the mysterious stranger said menacingly. "One or two shots more won't make much difference, and if I fire it will be the last of you. You will be picking daisies in the Land of Nod in half a minute, anyway, but before you go it might be well to warn you that your shots were probably wasted. We are on Second Avenue under the elevated, and, as it happened, there was a train rumbling over our heads while you were amusing yourself by peppering away at that window. We haven't been stopped, anyway. Ah, I see that my little dose is beginning to take effect! Pleasant dreams, my friend!"

It was the truth. The numbness had quickly spread over Nick's body, and limbs and arms now felt as heavy as lead. There was a ringing in his ears, and the leering, masked face above him swam drunkenly before his closing eyes. He struggled as one does in a nightmare, but without avail, and presently all was black darkness so far as he was concerned.

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning when he was attacked. When he at last struggled back to consciousness he found himself in the midst of the late twilight of a summer's day, and his first vague thought was one of amazement to find that he had been unconscious so long.

Little good his recalled senses did him then, as a matter of fact, for he found himself not only bound and gagged —which plight was so common in his experience that it no longer gave him the concern it might have otherwise have done—but that there was hardly a muscle in his body that he could move.

The realization of that fact nearly appalled him. Nothing else was required to prove the terrible nature of the drug that had been shot into him by the hypodermic needle, and in his weakness he found himself wildly wondering whether he would ever recover from its effects.

He had struggled a long time even to raise his eyelids far enough to see that evening was at hand, and that his new surroundings were utterly strange to him, and as different as it was possible to conceive from those in which he had been when he succumbed to the strange assault in the speeding limousine.

Dimly, through dulled eyes that played him all sorts of tricks, he made out that he was in about as narrow quarters as he had ever known. The faint light that he took to be that of early evening filtered in to him through the narrow crack two or three inches wide that ran along for some distance close to his left side. Through this crack, by turning his eyes laboriously, he could see a small distant window spattered over with whitewash. That was where the light came from. From the sides of the window, and the fact that the persons who occasionally passed it could be seen only from the waist down, he judged that he was in the basement of a large building.

His immediate surroundings, strange as they were, also spoke for themselves. He was lying on heavy planks, and similar planks surrounded him on all four sides, all of them covered with a grayish-white substance that gave off a familiar odor. No more than a foot above his head was the roof of his peculiar prison, composed of more planks similarly stained, with crosspieces ribbing them here and there.

This roof was not attached to the receptacle in which he lay, but was obviously part of a similar one that had been piled on top.

Nick estimated that his coffin—for it was more like that than anything else—was about eight feet square, and, as he sniffed the air, he did not need to be told of its nature.

He was lying in an otherwise empty mortar bed, probably the bottom one of several that had been piled up in the basement after repairs had been made to the building.

The spattered window indicated that something of that sort had been going on recently, and the glimpses that

Nick caught of the timbers supporting the floor above, as seen through the little crack, showed that it was not a new building.

If he had not been so helpless he would have attempted, bound as he was, to raise the mortar beds above him, enlarging the crack, but that was clearly out of the question in his present plight. There was nothing left for him to do but to review the situation, and hope that the almost total paralysis from which he was suffering would pass away before his captors should choose to take any further steps in regard to him.

As he looked back, he was certain that the car which had behaved in such an unwonted fashion had not been his, but one of the same model that had been cleverly altered into a trick car in preparation for his downfall. He remembered William Ashton Simpson's threats, and wondered if they could have anything to do with this latest experience. Perhaps so—perhaps not; he had no way of telling. He had not been in a position to recognize the masked man, and the mechanical glance he had thrown the chauffeur before entering the car had given him no reason to suppose that Ben Libbey was not at the wheel.

He was equally uncertain as to his whereabouts at that moment. He could not even be sure that he was in New York City, although it seemed reasonable to suppose that he was.

And the drug that was responsible for his condition? He puzzled over that for some time, his brain working much more slowly than usual. At last he came to the conclusion that he might be suffering from the effects of a comparatively small injection of curare. The thought would have brought a shudder with it had Nick's muscles been capable of producing one just then, for curare is a virulent poison used by the more savage Indians of South America to tip their arrows. In any considerable quantity it produces death almost immediately by completely paralyzing the motor nerves, and stopping the action of heart and lungs. Even in the minutest quantities it produces a similar but partial paralysis, that imprisons the muscles, renders the victim absolutely helpless, and plunges him into a long period of unconsciousness, without, however, fatally affecting the vital organs. Therefore his symptoms told Nick that it must be curare that he had to thank for his desperate state.

He was certain that his captors had not meant to kill him, for the present at least. If they had they would not have been so careful to give him such a small dose. Whatever might be their plans for him, however, he was in no condition to do more than wait for the outcome. If Ben Libbey were not an accomplice—and Nick did not believe now that he was—he must also have been disposed of in some way, and there was a bare chance that he might find some means of communicating with the detective's assistants. The chance was indeed slight, but the new chauffeur had been carefully chosen, and had seemed to Nick to promise unusual intelligence and resourcefulness, as well as the requisite fearlessness. If he had been treated with anywhere near the severity that Nick had met with, though, there was practically no hope in that direction.

But even that thought did not make the detective despair. He had, with good reason, the greatest amount of faith in Chick and Patsy, as well as the rest of his assistants. Knowing that he had not started off on any serious errand, they must by this time have strong suspicions that something unusual had occurred, and, unlikely as it seemed, they might yet succeed in following the trail of the strange limousine. They had done far harder things than that repeatedly.

But would they be able to duplicate their previous performances, and, if they did, would they find him in time? Those were the questions that drummed through the detective's half-deadened brain as he lay there on his back hour after hour, able only to move his eyes, and, to a very slight extent, his head. It was long after dark when he heard the first evidences of another presence in the unoccupied building.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THREAT OF VIVISECTION.

Footsteps, apparently of two men, were approaching from the rear of the building, and the sound of them indicated that they were walking on concrete.

A very feeble light from the street lamps and the windows of a saloon across the street penetrated the big basement, and it was evident that the newcomers were groping their way along cautiously, and without resorting to any other means of illumination. Doubtless they were afraid that a light in the basement would be noticed by somebody on the street, and would arouse suspicion.

They were muttering guardedly to each other as they approached the pile of mortar beds.

"Well, I guess he hasn't got away, from the looks of things," one of them remarked, as they came nearer.

"No fear of that, Steve," returned the other. "You can bet that the captain took care that he was put to sleep for fair!"

Their words, and the tones in which they were spoken, gave Carter something to think about. He had half expected to recognize the voice of Simpson, or that of some other cultivated, cynical gentleman crook, or, on the other hand, that he would find his captors speaking the peculiarly characteristic language of New York's underworld. These men, however, evidently belonged to another class. If Nick was not at fault, they were average members of the middle class—men who had had a reasonable amount of public-school education, and who might be expected to occupy a clerk's desk during the day, or to stand behind a counter.

And that was a surprising circumstance, for the detective's enemies were not ordinarily recruited from the ranks of such men.

The two stooped down in front of the crack which gave access to Nick's strange cell, and one of them held out the skirts of his coat as a screen, while the other flashed a pocket searchlight into the mortar bed.

"He's conscious," whispered the man, with the light.

"Yes, we'll have to be careful," responded his companion. "Turn off that thing!"

The light went out, but not before Nick had been able to see that the men were masked, and comparatively well dressed.

They then set to work dragging the upper mortar bed off, but they did it with as little noise as possible, and after they had hauled the detective out and left him lying on the cool concrete floor they methodically restored the pile of mortar beds to its previous appearance before they left the building.

When this was done they picked the helpless detective up between them and carried him into the deeper shadows at the rear of the basement. Presently they came to a door, opened it, locked it behind them, and carried Nick up a short flight of stone steps into a big yard between rows of five and six-story buildings, all of them dark and silent.

The yard was quickly traversed, and an alley gained. There, awaiting them, was the looming bulk of a big closed motor car, doubtless the same in which Nick's capture had been effected. A third man was standing beside the near door of the car, and had just wrenched it open as he heard them approaching. The detective was bundled in, and deposited gently enough in one corner of the back seat. The seat did not give way with him this time. The trick mechanism had served its purpose and gone out of use.

A few whispered words were exchanged by the three, and then a black silk handkerchief was bound over Nick's eyes. From the sounds he judged that one of the men who had brought him out took his place inside the limousine, while the other joined the chauffeur in front. As soon as this arrangement was effected, the car began jolting along the uneven surface of the alley.

Nick was evidently to exchange prisons, but whether for better or worse was not yet apparent. His captors, to be sure, did not seem to be nearly so vindictive or boastful as Nick had come to expect from most of his previous experiences, but the detective knew that he could not safely draw encouragement from that. If it proved anything, it was that they were of a superior sort, and therefore the more to be feared.

The trip must have occupied at least three hours, as near as Nick could tell, and most of the time the car was speeding over country roads.

Not long after the start, their route took them over a long bridge, as was apparent to Nick by reason of the hollow sounds which came to his ears, and the excessive vibration and rattling noise as trolley cars passed them repeatedly. From that he inferred that he was being taken to Long Island, and the almost continuous stretch of fine automobile road which the car covered later on, led him to suspect that his destination was somewhere on the South Shore, for the famous Merrick Road was the only one he could think of in that direction that would have permitted of such easy riding for so long a time.

At last the fast night run came to an end. The car seemed to run out on another hollow structure—a dock, as it afterward developed—and after a little delay Nick was dragged out, carried a few feet, and lowered into a boat. Before they left the dock he heard the big limousine backing off and chugging away, and three low voices came to his ears. He decided, therefore, that another man had joined the party at the dock.

The boat got under way almost immediately, and proved to be an electric launch, and as nearly silent as any power craft could be. It seemed to be quite roomy, and the absence of waves indicated that it was speeding along some protected sheet of water—probably the Great South Bay, if Nick had made no mistake in regard to the route.

The detective had no definite idea from what part of New York the start had been made, but he felt fairly certain that they had crossed the East River by way of the Queensboro Bridge. The length and the number of trolleys passed on the way was pretty good proof of that, and it must have been less than half an hour from the time they started until they reached the bridge.

If he were right about that, it was likely that the three hours' run, as he estimated theirs to have been, would have taken them somewhere near Amityville or Babylon. As a matter of fact, the launch had put off from Lindenhurst, so that Nick was surprisingly near the truth, considering his blindfolded condition.

His three captors did not indulge in any conversation, even now, and what there was of it was carried on for the most part in whispers. Nick heard frequent references to some one known as the "captain," however, and came to the conclusion that he must be the man who had injected the drug. Obviously he was not one of the party, for those in the launch referred to him as "taking a back seat now."

From the way they addressed each other, nevertheless, Carter was able to determine that one of them was known as Steve, one as Frank, and the other as "Doc." The latter, he felt sure, was the one who had just joined the others. The launch ran sweetly, without giving any trouble, but in spite of that fact the water trip proved to be a long one—not less than an hour and a half, according to Nick's inner clockwork, which had again and again proved itself to be unusually accurate in the measurement of time under such conditions.

At last his captors bestirred themselves as if preparing to land. The landing was not an easy matter, judging from the time it took, and the number of directions given. From these latter Nick concluded that they had reached one of the many islands which dotted the surface of the Great South Bay near its western end, and that the launch was being taken under its own power into some concealed nook, either into a cave or under some overhanging building or wharf.

At any rate, one of the men warned his fellows to duck their heads, and Nick could hear the wash of the wavelets against piles or walls close on either hand. A moment later the bay breeze ceased to fan his face, and he detected an odor as if of decaying wood and slimy-covered rocks in a confined space. The launch was fended off from something with a boat hook, and then came to a stop, its port side rubbing against masonry.

The detective was soon lifted through what seemed to be a trapdoor, and deposited, still almost as helpless as ever, on a damp stone floor. Close beneath him he could hear the waves lapping at the foundations.

Before he was left alone he was addressed directly for the first time, the speaker being, as he knew, the man known as Doc.

"Can you hear me and understand, Carter?" he asked, and the voice was plainly that of an educated man, and devoid of any particular rancor. "If so, nod your head."

Simultaneously a lantern was lighted, but the black handkerchief was not removed from the detective's eyes.

Nick nodded his head with an effort: it was all that he could have done just then.

"Good enough!" commented the spokesman of his captors. "I just wanted to advise you not to build anything on the fact that we haven't knocked you around, or threatened you with all sorts of things. You may not think it, but you are up against it harder than you have ever been before. I haven't any particular grudge against you, and neither have these boys, but that won't help you any. You are going to stay where you are until morning, and

then, when the light is strong enough, I am going to try an interesting experiment on you—something in the line of vivisection. You probably won't approve of it, but when I get through it really won't matter whether you approve or not. You won't care by that time. Don't misunderstand me. I haven't any intention of killing you. I wouldn't be guilty of anything as raw as that, or as useless. I know a lot of better ways of making sure that you will cease from troubling. See you later. Good night, and—er—pleasant dreams! Oh, you might put in the time reviewing your past successes. It will be about the last chance you'll have to indulge in that pleasant occupation."

With that, the speaker and the others went out, indulging in subdued chuckles as they did so.

A heavy door slammed shut behind them, a cumbersome, rusty lock squeaked, and a big bolt was shot into place. The footsteps receded, and Nick was left alone in the darkness, with the smell of damp, rotting wood in his nostrils, and the sound of lapping water coming from close beneath him.

We may be sure that the detective did not sleep that night. He was too busy wondering what those sinister hints meant, and too much occupied with his attempts to recover the use of his numbed muscles. In that, however, he failed hopelessly, and, when daylight began filtering through the folds of the black handkerchief his body from the waist down was still practically without feeling, and, although he could move his shoulders, his hands and forearms were as useless as ever.

The prospect was far from bright as the time drew near for the return of his jailers, and the carrying out of that mysterious threat of an experiment that was to be "in the line of vivisection."

CHAPTER IX.

THE NEW CHAUFFEUR.

It was nearly six o'clock on the evening before that Ben Libbey bounded up the stone steps in front of Nick Carter's residence on Madison Avenue and feverishly pressed the electric button. He was decidedly the worse for wear in appearance. One eye was in heavy mourning, one cheek was cut and covered with dried blood, his cap was missing, as was his collar, and his clothes were torn and dusty.

When Nick's butler, the usually self-possessed Joseph, opened the door, he started back a step, not so much for the new chauffeur's own sake, as because he knew that his employer had not returned since Ben had driven him away that morning.

"Whatever has happened, Libbey?" he demanded hoarsely. "Is Mr. Carter——"

"Hasn't he been back?" Ben asked breathlessly in his turn.

"Not a sign of him!"

"Then something has happened to him, and no mistake! Is Chick in, or Patsy?"

"Both."

Having learned that they were in Nick's study, the new chauffeur hastened there, and told his story disjointedly, much to the consternation of Nick's two assistants.

They had already felt a certain amount of anxiety about their chief's nonappearance. They were therefore more or less prepared to hear that something was wrong, but Ben's story put a much more serious face on the matter than they had anticipated, although it gave them no real clew to what had occurred.

Libbey's recital, the evident sincerity of which they did not doubt for a moment, was to the effect that a tall, lank individual with a big black patch over his left eye had suddenly slipped into the seat beside him while he was waiting for Nick to come out of the tenement house on East Seventy-seventh Street. The man's left arm ran across his chest close to the body, and his hand was hidden under his coat.

Ben had felt something hard press against his ribs, however, through the coat, and had been told to start the car immediately without making a sign to any one, unless he hankered after a sudden and violent death. There had been nothing for him to do but to obey, and he had done so. The man had then told him to drive to a certain corner on Avenue A, and, when they reached it, had compelled him to leave the car, turn down a side street, and enter an alley.

Libbey had been unfamiliar with that part of town, and soon found himself lost. With that concealed weapon always pressing against his ribs he had not dared to try to bolt, and had been unlucky enough not to see anything of a single policeman.

At length they entered a ramshackle tenement house through the rear door, and he was taken to a room that was lighted only by a small window on an airshaft.

A short, thickset man wearing a mask awaited them in this room, and the two set about securing their captor. Emboldened by the removal of the revolver from against his side, Libbey had offered resistance for the first time. He was rendered desperate by the prospect, and must have made things lively for the two. The odds were against him, however, and he was soon beaten into submission, bound hand and foot, and bitted and bridled.

Late in the afternoon he was left alone, and he promptly proceeded to take advantage of certain valuable knowledge gained in his boyhood, when his favorite playmate had been the son of a magician and sleight-of-hand performer, well known in the cheaper vaudeville theaters. From this lad he had learned the knack of slipping his wrists out of any ordinary bonds, and he had never lost the accomplishment.

Thus he had been enabled to escape, and had somehow managed to slip out of the building without being stopped. At the corner he had seen his car, but there was a man at the wheel whom he did not know, and who evidently did not recognize him. He had not been able to recover the machine, therefore, and, giving up all immediate hope of it, had got out of the neighborhood as fast as he could, and hurried to the detective's house.

Chick and Patsy immediately put their heads together. It was obvious that something serious had happened to their chief, and it did not take them long to come to the conclusion that Nick had been spirited away in a car that was identical to his own to all outward appearance.

The situation seemed to leave no other explanation, for it was practically out of the question to suppose that the detective had been seized while in the model tenement, for tenants were of a distinctly superior class, and Nick's errand there had been merely a routine one. He had told Ben that he would not be inside more than ten or fifteen minutes, and it was reasonable to suppose that he had left the building about the time he had expected to.

It was hardly to be supposed that anything had happened

to him immediately outside of a place of that description, any more than inside of it; for the immediate neighborhood is both crowded and orderly—a combination of characteristics that leaves little room for foul play in broad daylight.

Consequently Chick and Patsy reasoned that the detective must have found everything apparently serene when he emerged from the model tenement. That meant that what he supposed to be his own car had been awaiting him, with Ben Libbey's double in the driver's seat, and that Carter had slipped into it unsuspectingly. Certainly his own car had not been used for the purpose, for Ben himself had been obliged to drive it away with a revolver pressed to his side, and there would have been no time for it to have been taken back to Seventy-seventh Street before the detective was likely to be looking for it.

At any rate, Nick's assistants started out on this assumption. They made no attempt to go to the tenement house in which Ben had been confined, although the chauffeur gave them the address. Instead, they notified the police of the precinct, and asked to have the house watched by plain-clothes men, and all of the tenements kept under observation. Nick had not been taken there, so they went to Seventy-seventh Street and began working at the model tenement.

There they learned, as they had expected, that Nick had been in the building barely fifteen minutes, and that he had been seen to enter a big, black limousine. The latter was, to all appearance, the same one in which he had driven up. They found some one who had noticed the car leaving just after the detective had entered the building, and who had also seen Nick come out, but their informant had naturally assumed that the car had driven around for a while, and then returned in time to pick up its occupant again. That confirmed Chick and Patsy in the belief that a machine of the same description as Nick's had been employed, and it was evident that their task was to trace it if possible. They learned the direction it had taken, and succeeded in keeping on the trail by repeated inquiries. Fortunately for them the car was of unusual size, and therefore it was comparatively easy to hear of it at various places along the line.

Thus, after several hours' work, they managed to locate the building to which Nick had been first taken—the one where he had occupied the mortar bed in the basement. It proved to be a loft building on the upper East Side which had just been remodeled. They learned that it was still unoccupied, and then they began their vigil, one commanding the rear approaches, the other the front. It was then about nine o'clock at night. They were by no means sure that Nick was in the building, for they learned that the big car had driven off again. Still, it seemed worth while to hang around there for a time on the chance that something would develop. If Nick had been put out of the way already they could not help him, and, if he had not, the chances were that two or three hours' further delay would not make much difference.

Nothing having happened by ten o'clock, however, they decided to effect an entrance to the building by some means and search it. It was big enough to afford them plenty of opportunity for concealment in case it should be entered while they were there, and they hoped to find out without further delay whether Nick was really confined there or not.

But before taking this step they made some arrangements that were thoroughly characteristic of their methods. Chick slipped away for a few minutes, leaving Patsy on guard, and called up a garage where they were well known. He ordered a fast runabout, a six-cylinder touring car, and a taxicab, and gave instructions which insured that the three machines would be in that neighborhood and ready to hand in case they needed them.

He had ordered three instead of one, in order to guard against suspicion in case they should have to reckon with the big limousine again, and indulge in a nocturnal chase of it. Three cars of different types would, under such circumstances, attract much less attention than one, for no one would be likely to believe that he was being pursued by wholesale, and could almost be counted on therefore to make up his mind that he was not being pursued at all.

As soon as he had made these arrangements, Chick returned to Patsy, who had as yet seen no signs of life about the building. They made their way to the rear without delay, and soon gained entrance by picking the lock. They were just about to descend to the basement in order to begin their search, when they were obliged to make themselves scarce. They had heard a motor car—a big one by the sound—enter the alley and stop at the rear of the building.

Luckily the newcomers made their way directly to the basement by means of the area stairs outside, and thus did not come anywhere near the two detectives. Chick and Patsy stole to the head of the inner stairs, and heard the mortar beds being removed. They were not near enough to be sure of the number of men involved, and even if they had known that there were only two, it is safe to say that they would not have interfered at that stage unless it had become apparent that their chief was in immediate danger. The longer they delayed, the more they would learn about the plot and those implicated.

Nothing occurred to alarm them. They guessed that Nick had been concealed there, and was now about to be carried elsewhere, but they were quite capable of handling that situation if the three cars which Chick had ordered arrived on time.

To be sure, they regretted that they had not searched the building earlier, and thereby got into touch with Nick in time to release him if he desired to be released, or at least to make some arrangements with him and learn what he knew. There was no use in crying over spilled milk, though, and they congratulated themselves on having the situation so well in hand, as it seemed to them.

It came about in this way that when the big black limousine sped away into the night, Chick followed it in a sixty-horse-power touring car, and Patsy in a racing runabout, while an empty taxicab also rattled along in its wake.

CHAPTER X.

NICK CARTER LEARNS HIS FATE.

Nick's cell was invaded about six o'clock the morning after he was deposited there. It was then broad daylight, but, owing to the black handkerchief, the detective had not been able to obtain the slightest glimpse of his surroundings, and knew no more about them than when he had been left alone the night before.

"Well, how goes it, Carter?" asked the same voice that

had wished him good night in such a sinister fashion some hours before.

Still there was no particular animosity in the voice. Nothing of the conventional villain's sneer. It seemed, if anything, that the man whom his companions had called Doc was secretly sorry for the detective, but in spite of all that, Nick's instinct told him that he was in the gravest possible danger.

These men obviously had no personal quarrel with him, but just as clearly they were under orders and meant to carry them out to the letter.

Nick naturally did not answer, being gagged. Strong hands laid hold of him, lifted him up, and placed him on what he rightly took to be a table. The gag was then removed from his mouth for the first time, but the handkerchief was left where it was.

"I thought you might like to indulge in some last words," went on the same voice, with just a hint of mockery in it. "I'm afraid we can't run the risk of transmitting any messages for you, but at least you can have the satisfaction of speaking. I will give you just five minutes before I begin my little stunt. I'd advise you to make the most of them."

"What do you think I am—a child?" Nick demanded, as soon as he could get his much-abused tongue into a state of articulation. "I don't know who you fellows are, or what's behind this game of yours, but you evidently think you can scare me by the vaguest sort of threats. I'll tell you right now that you can't. That curare, or whatever it was that was pumped into me yesterday has certainly done its work, so that I am not likely to offer any resistance, but don't count too much on having things all your own way. You may find yourself badly mistaken, as a great many others have done."

"Don't bank on my being mistaken, Carter," Doc replied, in the same half-indifferent, half-pitying tone, still as unrelenting as before. "You are miles away from help of any kind, and we have covered our tracks so that your assistants could not find us in a hundred years. This is no lodge initiation, Carter, it's the real thing, in spite of the fact that we haven't seen fit to make any great fuss about it. Would you like to know what's going to happen to you in—three minutes more?"

"It might prove interesting," Nick replied calmly.

"Well, I'll tell you. First, I am going to give you some smelling salts in the shape of a cone of ether, and then I'm going to cut into this precious skull of yours, and remove some highly important portions of that remarkable brain that has served you so well, and given so much trouble to those who like to play hide-and-seek on the wrong side of the law."

"That plan is rather novel," murmured Nick, his expression not changing in the least. "I suppose I may assume, then, that you have legitimately earned your nickname of Doc?"

"Oh, I am a doctor, all right," replied the unseen man. "I know exactly what to do in order to deprive you permanently not only of your memory, but of practically every mental faculty that has made you what you are. It isn't a pleasant thing to think about, even for me. I had much rather knock you on the head at once, or slit your throat. But a black mark has gone up against your name, however, and the powers that be have given me a chance to show my surgical skill. It's up to me to make good, and if I don't I might as well say good-by to this vale of tears myself. Time's up, Carter! You are a brave man, and you have been one of the greatest. It's all over now, though."

The detective had heard him opening what was probably a case of instruments, and placing several metallic objects on the table. Other preparations had been swiftly made, and now, before Carter had time to say anything more, even if there had been anything to say, something stifling was clapped over his nose and mouth.

Instinctively he tried to turn his head to one side, but it was in a powerful grasp, and he could move it only an inch or two. He could hold his breath, however, and he did so, determined to remain conscious as long as he possibly could.

His situation was indescribably terrible, and his thoughts, like those of a drowning man, raced back over the past at lightning speed.

In those few seconds of awful suspense, when his lungs seemed bursting, memory flitted from case to case of his past successes.

Well, the end seemed to have come without a doubt. He knew that this man could do exactly what he threatened, and once that operation was performed, only the shell of Nick Carter would remain.

If he survived the shock to the brain, which was extremely doubtful, he would be an idiot of the lowest type, a mere eating, drinking, and sleeping hulk of a man. Probably he would be found weeks afterward at some distant place, wandering about with a trepanned skull, unable to tell his name. Death would be a thousand times better than such a pitiful end.

Who could it be who had decreed such an unspeakable revenge? Was it——"

But Nick's tortured lungs failed him. He would infinitely have preferred to hold his breath until death came, but he could not do it. Involuntarily he drew in a great gasping breath, and his lungs filled with the ether. It seemed as if he were in a whirlpool at the foot of a mighty falls, and that tons of water were pouring down upon him and driving him beneath the surface, while the force of the whirlpool sucked at him irresistibly.

After an agonizing struggle he lost consciousness.

CHAPTER XI.

PATSY HAS A BUSY TIME.

It would have been practically impossible for any one except Chick and Patsy to have continued their pursuit so long under such difficult conditions without giving the pursued an inkling of the fact. Indeed, as it was, the feat would have been doubly hard had there not been other cars on the road at the same time.

The presence of these other machines served to cloak the young detectives' designs, and to render their three cars still more inconspicuous. Moreover, since it is true that cars travel at much the same speed over long distances, and pass and repass one another, there was nothing particularly questionable about their keeping up with the black limousine as it sped along the Merrick Road.

In order to divert any possible suspicion from himself, Patsy drove his low-slung runabout ahead early in the race—it had formerly been the property of a famous amateur automobile racer. He frequently turned his face over his shoulder for a moment, however, and thus kept track of the situation.

When Lindenhurst was finally reached he was just in time to see the limousine turn off the main road in the direction of the bay. As soon as he could he brought his own machine to a stop, turned it around, and brought it back to the corner. By that time Chick had drawn near and had slowed down. They conferred for a few moments, and then decided to separate temporarily. They were only a short distance from the water, and Chick planed to drive the touring car toward the bay, but by way of the next cross street.

That would bring him to the water front only a block away from Nick's captors, if they kept on their present course. It would also bring him to a boathouse kept by a man whom they knew. If the conspirators were going to take the detective across the bay, it would be an easy matter for Chick to pick the lock of the boathouse, leave a note for the owner, and borrow one of the launches. It was one o'clock in the morning, and no one was likely to interfere with him—at least in time to prevent his getaway.

Meanwhile Patsy was to lock one of the runabout's wheels with a chain and padlock, and shadow the limousine on foot. If all of the party took to a boat he was then to join Chick at the boathouse, and the two would continue the pursuit in the borrowed launch. If, however, the chauffeur of the limousine remained behind, as was probable, Patsy was to hold him up and try to force him to squeal on his pals. In that case Chick would take the launch out alone, and try to avoid coming to close quarters, contenting himself, if possible, with locating the retreat of the band. As for the taxi, its chauffeur was instructed to hold it in the mouth of one of the side streets, ready for further orders, or, failing that, to take up the chase of the limousine alone if he should see it returning toward the street.

This plan was carried out almost as quickly as it was formulated, and the result was that Chick took to the water alone, and Patsy remained behind to bring his gentle persuasions to bear on the driver of the black limousine.

The young detective had got close enough to the wharf to see that the car was going to be taken away again, and at that he sprinted back to the runabout, unlocked the wheel, and climbed in. The limousine approached a few moments later, and Patsy, confident that his lean little racer could overtake the big machine whenever he wished, allowed it to turn into the Merrick Road unmolested, and to head backward toward town. He was afraid that the driver would require some gun play before he was subdued, and he did not wish anything of that sort to happen so close to the dock from which the others were leaving, for fear they would take the alarm.

Giving the limousine a good start, he made after it, but at first tried to do no more than duplicate its speed. Pretty soon, though, he thought it safe to overhaul it, and proceeded to do so with almost ludicrous ease. Drawing his automatic, he forged ahead until the two machines were racing along the splendid roadbed neck and neck.

"Halt!" he called peremptorily, the little steel barrel of his weapon gleaming in the moonlight as he covered the man with it.

For answer, the driver of the limousin threw in his highest speed and shot ahead. A few moments later Patsy was again abreast, however. The other opened fire without warning as the young detective drew alongside for the second time, but his shot did no more than shatter the wind shield.

Garvan instantly replied, and with much better aim, for he sent a little bullet crunching into the man's right arm as it rested on the steering wheel—for the unknown had fired with his left hand.

The fellow gave a groan, and his wounded hand relinquished the wheel. Before he could drop his weapon and steady the car with his left hand, it had swerved ponderously, and thrown itself at sixty miles an hour into a great elm at the roadside. The crash was a terrific one, and the big, costly limousine was completely wrecked. Its driver, however, had had the presence of mind to jump from the side away from Patsy just before the impact. He was not in time to get clear of the car altogether, but he succeeded in escaping serious injury.

Before he could pick himself up, Patsy had brought the runabout to a halt, and bounded back to the scene of the wreck. The frightened and wounded man was quickly handcuffed. Fortunately they had left the village some distance behind, and there were no houses in the immediate vicinity; therefore no one appeared to interfere with Patsy or take up his time with demands for an explanation of the affair.

The young detective was consequently free to put his prisoner through an improvised third degree of his own. He impressed upon the man the seriousness of the situation, informed him that the limousine had been shadowed all the way from the model tenements in East Seventy-seventh Street to the unoccupied loft building, and from there to Lindenhurst. Likewise he made the most of the fact that Chick was even then in a position to follow the launch wherever it went.

"Now you can see just where we've got you," Patsy said. "We could have held you up at that loft building if we'd wanted to, and put the three of you out of business at the drop of a hat. We chose to follow you instead, and find out all we could. You are in a peck of trouble, my friend, and your pals will find themselves there, too, just as soon as we are ready to spring the trap on them. There's no getting by that, but you can get some time off—maybe get off altogether—by confessing and telling me how to locate the rest of the gang with the least trouble. If you don't, I warn you it will go hard with you. We'll press all the charges involved to the very limit. You can't save the others by keeping mum, but you can save yourself a lot by speaking up."

Patsy had meanwhile marched his prisoner to the runabout, swung it around, and started back toward Lindenhurst. The man demurred sullenly for some minutes, but at last, as they approached the dock from which his fellow conspirators had so recently put off, he weakened and declared himself ready to tell all he knew—at least as to the destination of the party in the launch, and the terrible revenge that they had planned to mete out to Nick Carter.

At this juncture Patsy was amazed to see Chick appear on the scene. Nick's senior assistant had decided, on second thoughts, to trust to Patsy to capture the driver of the limousine, and put him in a frame of mind to give them the desired information. He had entered the boathouse and put the launch in readiness, but at the last moment had realized that it would be unwise to pursue the other craft at that hour of the night, especially alone.

The three who were carrying Nick off across the bay could hardly fail to guess at once, under those circum-

stances, that they were being followed. That would prevent their rendezvous being located, and perhaps result in some of the others of the gang slipping away. Besides, if they showed fight, it would be a case of three to one, and the young detective might easily be put out of business without having struck a single effective blow for Nick's deliverance.

He had contented himself, accordingly, with keeping an eye on the launch as long as possible, and noting the course taken. That end of the great bay, and the beaches which separated it from the ocean were more or less familiar to him, and he believed that, even if Patsy failed, they could locate the retreat of the conspirators sooner or later, especially as it was then at the height of the summer season, and hundreds of vacationists were occupying cottages on the beaches and many of the islands, so that pretty thorough inquiries could be made.

It was doubtless a wise move, and, in view of Patsy's haul, all turned out for the best. The captured driver—who gave his name as George Blake—claimed to be a clerk in a wholesale grocery house, and a corporal in Company F, 50th Regiment, New York National Guard. He steadfastly refused to tell why he was mixed up in the affair, or give the names of any of those involved, except his recent companions in the limousine.

He was evidently keeping much back, but his captors were well content, for the time being, with the information elicited. Blake gave the names of the other three as Frank Boggs, Steve Worsley—both in the same company and regiment as himself—and Doctor Lionel Harding, of Amityville, Long Island. His description of the place to which they were taking Nick proved to be familiar to the two young detectives, for they had made frequent visits to the bay, both on business and pleasure, and remembered the landmark referred to.

It was a massively built stone house, situated at the extreme eastern point of a long, narrow island lying about a mile or so back of Jones' Beach. It had a square tower that was visible for miles, and had been built many years before, and at considerable expense, but had fallen into partial decay, and had not been occupied for ten years or more. Part of one wing of it was built on stone piers which carried it actually over the water.

There, Blake declared, Doctor Harding was to perform an operation on the great detective, but not until the next morning. His reluctant admissions in regard to the nature of the operation made the young detective's blood run cold, but they knew that they would have plenty of time to prevent the carrying out of that dastardly purpose.

With their usual confidence in their own unaided efforts, they determined not to ask the assistance of the Lindenhurst authorities. The odds against them were not great enough to give them any alarm, it being only a case of two against three, therefore they made up their minds to steal out to the island in question under cover of the darkness, but to wait for light before making the attack.

Chick had seen a small catboat moored just off the boathouse, and they agreed to take that instead of a launch. It would enable them to make a landing on the island without being heard. They put this plan into operation at once, taking their prisoner along with them, after gagging him so that he could not warn his late companions.

The wind was contrary, however, and the result was that they did not reach the other end of the island until almost daybreak. Leaving Blake securely trussed up in the catboat, they stealthily made their way toward the house, and, finding everything dark and quiet, presently discovered the whereabouts of the electric launch, which was moored under the wing of the building which projected over the water. The tide was nearly out at that time, and there was hardly three feet of water between the stone piles. They crawled under the wing, and easily located the trapdoor in the floor.

Of course, they were unaware that their chief was lying bound in the room above them, but they decided to remain where they were, for they reasoned that the trapdoor had probably been left unfastened, and offered the easiest means of access to the house.

Consequently they were just beneath the room and within earshot when the crooked surgeon and his two companions at length entered. While the doctor was delivering his maddening speech to Nick they had all they could do to keep from making their presence known, but they managed to restrain themselves until the supreme moment came.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SURPRISE ON THE ISLAND.

Chick and Patsy had not counted on the action taking place directly in the room into which the trapdoor opened, and they now realized that they would be at a great disadvantage if both of them remained where they were and attempted to stop the diabolical proceedings by throwing open the trapdoor, and climbing into the room.

Therefore, while the ether was being administered to Nick, Chick cautiously waded out from beneath and crawled around the wing on his hands and knees, keeping out of sight below the window sills.

Fortunately there was an outside door to the room in which the three men were standing over the helpless detective. Chick stationed himself in front of that entrance, listened for a moment, and then blew a shrill blast on his police whistle as a signal to Patsy. Simultaneously he threw his weight against the door and turned the knob. It was unfastened, so that Chick won his way into the room with an automatic in each hand, just as the trapdoor was thrown violently back from beneath, and Patsy's head appeared through the opening.

Young Garvan was similarly armed, and consequently the three rascals found themselves unexpectedly covered by four revolvers held in steady, practiced fingers.

"Toss up your hands there!" commanded Chick.

"And be blamed quick about it, too!" added Patsy.

They were evidently not to win the day without a desperate struggle, however, for, instead of obeying, the doctor sprang behind the table on which Nick had been laid out, while the other two ducked as if at some silent command, and launched themselves one at Chick, and one at Patsy, drawing their weapons as they did so, and firing from their hips.

But the young detectives' weapons spoke an instant sooner, and Patsy, who was firing with his elbows resting on the floor, brought down the man who was coming for him. He got a shot through his hat brim in return, but that did not worry him. He kept his eye on his wounded opponent to see that the latter did not give any further trouble, and instantly swung his left arm around and opened fire, more by instinct than anything else, at the doctor's legs under the table.

His shots rang out in quick succession, and the little automatic kept on moving slightly as Patsy fired.

The doctor had guessed what he was up to, and had been nervously firing across Nick's motionless body, but he did not succeed in hitting Patsy. The latter's third shot, however, brought a yell from Harding, and the would-be "vivisectionist" crumpled up with a bullet in his thigh.

Having thus at least disabled two out of the three, Patsy hoisted himself through the opening and proceeded warily to finish his work. First he made a swift dive around the table after the doctor, knocked the latter's pistol from his hand, and in almost the same motion snapped a handcuff on one of his wrists.

Harding was resisting fiercely by this time, and it was by no means such an easy matter to bring the other wrist within reach of the steel jaws, but Patsy did not forget himself during the struggle, and took pains to see that most of his body was shielded either by the doctor's form, or by the table.

The scoundrel that had been wounded first was still in possession of his weapon, and looking malignantly for an opening as he lay huddled on the floor.

As for Chick, he had received a slight nick in the shoulder, and had just given his antagonist a bullet in the right hand as a return keepsake. Before he could follow up his advantage, though, the other, whirling around, unexpectedly dove through the opening which Patsy had vacated and dropped into the water with a great splash.

Chick was after him in a second, but the man on the floor tripped him as he passed, throwing him heavily, and dazing him.

Fortunately Patsy finished with the doctor just then, and, just as his first opponent was about to fire at the prostrate Chick, a flushed Irish face appeared above Nick's body, and an automatic slid to rest.

"Cut that out, or you're a dead man!" Patsy remarked, with menacing quietness.

The man on the floor took the hint, and dropped his weapon as if it were too hot to hold. Calmly but swiftly young Garvan then swept the surgeon's instruments into a bag that stood beside the table, and kicked the bag through the opening into the water. The revolver which the last man had dropped followed the instruments a moment later, and then Patsy drew some stout, heavy cord from his pocket, and proceeded to tie up the man on the floor, just as Chick sat up and looked about him confusedly.

"Don't fret about our friend down below," Patsy called cheerily. "I took pains to put that motor boat temporarily out of commission before I did my little jack-in-the-box stunt. He won't find much nourishment down there!"

Obviously that was the case, for they could hear the third man cursing and splashing about in the shallow water.

Patsy did not stop just then to do a very thorough job of tying, but he made certain that his latest captive would not give any immediate trouble.

Scarcely more than half a minute sufficed to bring that assurance, and by that time Chick was himself again.

"You play hide and seek with him through this trap, and I'll run around and corner him by way of the water," Patsy proposed briskly, giving his man a parting kick for good measure.

Chick nodded silently, and crouched down by the opening, automatic in hand, while Patsy ran out of the door around the corner, and into the water. The third man had lost his weapon in his precipitated dive through the trap into the waters of the bay, and as a result it was a comparatively easy matter to induce him to surrender.

Thereby they made a clean sweep of all those directly concerned in Nick's disappearance. All that remained to be done was to release Carter himself, do what they could at the time to restore him to consciousness, and carry their four prisoners back to the mainland.

The effects of the ether soon wore off, but the curare still maintained its dreaded hold on the great detective. He assured his anxious assistants, however, that the paralysis would gradually disappear, and it did, as a matter of fact, although several days elapsed before complete recovery came.

The electric launch was speedily put in working order, and Nick and the doctor were put into it, Boggs and Worsley being stowed with Blake in the sailboat, which was towed to shore.

The four captives were lodged behind the bars, and brought to trial a few weeks afterward. Doctor Harding received the heaviest sentence, of course, but Boggs and Worsley also got stiff ones. In view of his partial confession, however, and the valuable information which he had given, Nick interceded on behalf of George Blake, with the result that the latter was sent away for only a very short time.

To that extent the result was very satisfactory, but no one knew better than Nick and his assistants that the bottom of the conspiracy had not been reached. The man referred to as the captain was still at large, and while Chick had been crawling around the house on the island that morning, after Nick had been rendered unconscious by the ether, Patsy had heard something that suggested that William Ashton Simpson was behind the affair in some capacity.

There was little doubt that that was the case, but it could not be proved, and meanwhile Simpson and his wife were still out on bail, and using their influence and money to delay final action.

THE END.

Further efforts of the great detective and his assistants to get the man higher up in this case will be found in the next issue of this weekly, No. 95, out July 4th, in the story entitled "Outlaws of the Militia; or, Nick Carter Strangely Attacked."

JAPANESE ARTISTIC PAINTING.

There are no people in the world who can produce such truly artistic results from the simplest materials as the Japanese. Most of their remarkable work is done from beginning to end solely with the aid of India ink, and, as a rule, the simpler the modes of delineation affected the more satisfactory the results.

There is an account of a traveler, who, while wandering listlessly through the streets of Pekin, was struck with admiration at the workmanship of a Jap screen painter, who was sitting in his studio open to the street.

The European, wishing to give him a difficult task to test his real capabilities, requested him to execute a bunch of grapes. Judge of his surprise when the artist seized

a scrap of screen paper, and dipping his thumb into the India ink began to make a few crescent-shaped smudges. Thinking he must have been misunderstood, the stranger smiled, but said nothing.

The crescent-shaped forms being finished, the first finger and thumb were dipped together into the ink, and then on to the paper. With a few skillful turns he produced two shaded forms of irregular outline. Then with his thumb nail he worked in a few dark lines here and there, and smilingly handed over the finished sketch to the amazed European, who saw before him a bunch of plump, round grapes, with a stalk and two lifelike leaves, all the result of some five minutes' work.

The Syndicate of Crime.

Or, King Nelson's Puzzling Quest

By HARRIE IRVING HANCOCK.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 88 of NICK CARTER STORIES. If you have not read the preceding chapters, get the back numbers from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XIX—(*Continued.*)

It was Nelson who was lifted this time and quickly carried down the continuation of the tunnel. He calculated that his bearers had taken about one hundred and ten steps by the time they came to the end of the tunnel. They stepped into a room undoubtedly far underground. The floor of this room, which was about eighteen feet square, was of wood; the walls and ceilings were hung with black cloth. A single oil lamp, hanging from the ceiling lighted this strange apartment.

At the present moment there was no furniture in the room. Dawson lay on the floor in one corner. King Nelson was deposited on the floor about six feet from his subordinate, after which the evil pair hastily left to fetch Reggy.

"Are you all right, chief?" whispered Dawson, in a low voice."

"Yes," answered King Nelson shortly, "but not talking when I don't know who may be listening."

Dawson took the hint and remained silent.

Not many minutes had passed when Ike and The Trompett returned, fairly staggering under the weight of the athletic Reggy, now as helpless and harmless as a kitten.

"Call the roll," said Ike, with a cheerful grin, after closing the door that led into the tunnel. "Gentlemen, I don't know who any of you are at the present readin', but I reckon we'll all become better acquainted. First of all, to see what you've got in your pockets."

He brought to light a revolver from King Nelson's clothes.

"Thought I took one from you earlier to-night," said Ike, with easy good nature. "You must have a mine of these irons somewhere."

With that, he passed on to Dawson, securing a revolver, watch, and some money. Reggy's pockets held nothing but holes.

"SS-ss-sst!" sounded a signal from beyond. Promptly turning on his heel, Ike vanished through the wall hangings. He was gone for some minutes. During that time The Trompett remained in the room, regarding the prisoners with grim silence. At last Ike came into the room again.

"Gentlemen," he began, in a tone that was mockingly respectful, "a friend of mine in the next room wants me to put a few civil questions to you."

"Begin with me," suggested Reggy sneeringly. "My history is a short one, and you'll soon get to the end of it."

"Keep quiet," said King Nelson sternly. "Say nothing."

"Oh, if that's the program," rejoined Reggy promptly, "I shan't have another word to say to-night."

"Oh, you'll all talk soon enough, and say all we want you to," leered Ike. "If you don't, it'll be some worse for you. Now, as you"—sharply regarding King Nelson—"seem to be taking the lead on your side, suppose you do the first talking. It ain't the first time we've found you snooping around on our trail to-night. Who are you, and what are you up to? Who do you work for in this business, and what's their game?"

King Nelson remained silent, looking contemptuously up into the face of his questioner.

"Come, talk faster!" prodded Ike, administering a hearty kick by way of emphasis.

A full minute passed, Ike glaring down at his victim, the latter returning the glare with the coolest smile in the world.

"Sister," suggested Ike, turning around at last to The Trompett, "it don't look as if these fellows would be sociable until we show 'em what we can do for 'em. Bring in the coffee."

With a hoarse chuckle, The Trompett left the room. Ike got down upon his knees, removing the detective's shoes and stockings.

"Here's the coffee—piping hot," announced the woman, reappearing through the hangings. She brought with her a brasier of lighted charcoal, into which were thrust two soldering irons.

"Found your tongue yet, stranger?" demanded Ike.

King Nelson remained silent, staring at the ceiling. Ike waited for probably thirty seconds, then pulled one of the soldering irons from the glowing coals. He held it up, admiring the red-hot end.

"Going to talk?" he insisted.

Still silence on the part of the detective.

Sizz-zz-zz-zz! The iron, at red heat, was held lightly against the detective's right ankle.

"What do you say now?" leered Ike.

"You're a coward—a cur!" retorted the detective, in a voice of suppressed rage. "If I had one hand free, I'd make you swallow that iron."

"Good idea!" mocked Ike. "I'll try it on you, if everything else fails."

Sizz-zz-zz! The flesh of the other ankle was seared, causing King Nelson to writhe with the torment. But he gritted his teeth, uttering no groan.

"What do you say now?" insisted Crawford.

There was the same silence as before.

At a wink from Ike, The Trompett began to remove Reggy's tattered, dilapidated shoes. There were no stockings underneath.

Without warning, the hot iron was held against the sole of one of Reggy's bare feet.

"Maybe you're willing to talk," chuckled Ike.

"Try it on the other one," rejoined Broke, with heroic

nonchalance. "That will save your time and get you along quicker!"

"You're a brick, old fellow," muttered King Nelson, in a voice of deep gratitude. This tramp, the acquaintance of an hour or two, was most unexpectedly showing fine manly mettle.

Drawing the other iron from the coals, Ike applied it to Reggy's other foot, holding it there a little longer. Stifling back the groan, Broke began to hum "Rock of Ages."

"Cool, ain't ye?" jeered Ike. "Oh, well, wait."

"Ss-ss-sst!" Obeying that summons from the watchful unseen one, Ike once more disappeared behind the curtain, The Trompett burying the business end of both irons in the charcoal.

"It's up to you now," announced Ike, bending over Dawson, when he returned. "My orders are to give you a chance to save your whole gang. If you don't—glory! Won't you wish you had! You're only on the warm edge of things yet, and if you don't give in, we'll hurry things up to the finish. We've got a pretty full outfit here. You won't any of you live through the job if you push me to the end of the thing."

Seeing that Dawson's lips were grimly and tightly closed, without any sign of willingness to speak, Ike quickly seized the iron, leaving its hot impress upon each of the operative's soles.

But Dawson, like his chief and the gritty tramp, remained silent.

"Oh, well," asserted Ike, with wrathful assurance, "we'll give you the real thing now, in the way of torture. No more fooling! And don't begin to whine about mercy—'cause you ain't a-going to get it right off!"

He vanished from the room, The Trompett following him with the brasier and the irons, leaving their three victims to wonder what that infernal thing was that was coming next.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN ELSIE KNEW.

There was great uneasiness at Fort Nelson on the following morning over the nonappearance of the great detective.

Phil Darrell, the only one who had been fully in his confidence in the matter, knew that the detective had expected to return long before daylight.

True, his being overdue by a few hours was not a matter for instant uneasiness, but Phil felt that if Nelson had not returned by noon, it would be time to think that matters might have gone sadly wrong.

Phil, with a pipe between his teeth, and both hands shoved reflectively down into his trousers pockets, was pacing back and forth in Nelson's office at about nine o'clock in the morning, when there came a tap on the door.

In answer to his "come in," Doctor Rockwell entered. Elsie's guardian had not been out of the house since his arrival at the fort. He had promised that he would not do so, or give any clew to his whereabouts to any one until the detective felt that the case was far enough advanced to permit of such a risk.

"Well," asked Phil, "have you breakfasted?"

"Yes, thanks to the persistence of Mrs. Ferris. She is a wonderful housekeeper, and thinks of everything. But I came to tell you about my poor child. She is much stronger this morning; she has recognized me, and I had all I could do to keep her from talking about her tragic adventure. I cannot help feeling that King Nelson will want to be the first to hear that story."

"You are right there," approved Phil. "And it will do Miss Rockwell no harm to put off for a little longer the exciting and terrible account that she will have to give us."

"I hope King Nelson will come soon," sighed the old doctor. "I confess that I am as curious as a country postmaster."

"And hardly more so than I," smiled Phil. "I have given my whole thought and being to this case. It is hard to wait patiently for the solution of a mystery that absorbs me so entirely. But I know that, if possible, King Nelson will want to hear your ward's first unrehearsed account."

"That is why I have left Elsie," said the old man. "She is anxious to talk—to tell me all. She was on the point of insisting on it, and I had to forbid her speaking of it at present."

"I am worried about something," went on Darrell. "Perhaps I am foolish, but the fact is, King Nelson has not returned, and it is long past the time when I expected him."

"Surely you do not think he has met foul play?" cried the old man.

"I am foolish, no doubt, but that is exactly what I do fear. He went away last night to spy upon people who would not hesitate to kill him if they caught him and divined his object. If he is not here within a few hours, I shall be fearful of the worst."

"Dear me," ejaculated Doctor Rockwell, looking decidedly anxious, "I hope that excellent man has got into no trouble on our account. I should never forgive myself."

"You need not reproach yourself," returned Phil. "It is almost certain that, sooner or later, this determined detective will come to harm. He cannot forever war against desperate criminals, and come off unscathed. I myself have known King Nelson to come three times already within an ace of being killed on this case. If he is in danger again, I can only hope that his former luck will stay by him. Probably I am a baby to let myself be worried so easily. Sir, have you any objection to my going to see Miss Rockwell?"

"By no means; I shall be glad to conduct you to her room myself."

They went down the corridor together. At the door of the sick room the old man knocked softly, receiving a cheery "come in" from Blanche, whom they found seated in a chair close to the foot of the bed. She rose, smiling brightly at Phil and his companion, as they entered.

"My dear child," cried Doctor Rockwell, advancing quickly to the bedside, where he knelt and took one of Elsie's hands in his, "I have already told you that you owe your very life to this young woman and one other. I now bring to you that other, Mr. Phillip Darrell."

Releasing her hand, Elsie held it up in turn to Phil, who came forward, blushing like a schoolboy. There was a gulp in his throat as he took that dainty, white, wasted hand in his and tried to say something.

"How much do you know of what happened to me?"

queried the girl, looking up eagerly at him. "Do you know——"

"Hush, I beg of you," answered Phil gently. "It will not do for you to talk yet, Miss Rockwell."

"But I cannot get over my awful fright," went on the girl, with a shudder. "It was so terrible! I do not feel safe. I never shall feel safe again!"

"Hush!" begged Phil, pressing her hand a little more tightly. He had not yet let it go, but held to it as if it was the only thing in life worth possessing. "There is no need to be afraid. This is the safest place in the world to be, and none could harm you here if he would."

"What place is this?" asked Elsie. "Surely not a prison—not even a hospital."

"No. It is a home, the home of a friend of mine."

"Tell me more," pleaded the girl, fixing her eyes more wistfully on his face.

Poor Phil! It was the hardest thing in the world for him to refuse, especially as he felt that the pressure of her own hand was tightening. Nothing but loyalty to King Nelson prevented him from telling her all she wanted to know, and from learning all of her own story that she was willing to relate. But no, her account must be postponed for the present.

CHAPTER XXI.

SEARCHING FOR THE MURDERERS.

"Do you know, Miss Rockwell," he said, bending closer to her, "that in a little while, say by to-morrow, you will be wonderfully stronger? Meanwhile, will you not trust everything to us?"

"To be sure, I will," was her earnest, grateful answer that made Phil thrill until he was afraid she would see how he was trembling with the happiness of being near her.

"I may be bold enough to come in again once or twice to-day," went on Phil gently, as he gradually withdrew his hand from hers. "If I come, please remember that we are not, just yet, to talk about—about—things—you know."

"I understand," smiled Elsie. "I hope you will find me a very good and grateful girl. Later on I shall try to make you realize how grateful I am for all you have done for daddy and me."

"Talk about anything else all you wish," said Phil. "You will find Miss Strull a very kind friend to you."

"Oh, I have been talking with her already," declared Elsie. "She has told me that her name is Blanche. It was yesterday afternoon when I began to know what was happening around me. Since then she has not been away from me. She sat in her chair all last night, and I am certain she did not sleep a half an hour at any time."

Phil gave Blanche a grateful look, which the sick girl did not see. Then, with a smile at Miss Rockwell, he turned and left the room, followed by Doctor Rockwell.

In the office the two men sat smoking during the forenoon. Doctor Rockwell asked for no more information than he already possessed, and Phil, restrained by discretion, did not volunteer any.

Noon came, still with no sign of King Nelson. In the afternoon, Darrell sought Mrs. Ferris, who, he knew, was a trusted confidante of the detective's.

"It looks bad, but it's most certainly all right," said Mrs. Ferris. "King Nelson wouldn't want any fuss made over his failure to get back on time."

So Phil passed the afternoon, consumed by anxiety. Evening brought no relief. He passed a wretched night of foreboding, sleeping but little. In the morning, Mrs. Ferris, too, was terribly distressed.

"It is his custom to send one of his men a cipher message when he is away longer than he had expected to be."

"Is it not time," suggested Phil, "for us to consult with some of his men? If anything has happened to him, it is time, it seems to me, that an effort is made to find out what."

"I will get two of his best men here at once," decided Mrs. Ferris, and, as this conversation had taken place in the office, she had but to step into the telephone closet.

Within twenty minutes, Messrs. Lewis and Davis had reported. Phil and Mrs. Ferris explained the long absence of the chief, and Phil described as nearly as he could the location of the house which King Nelson had gone to watch.

"I can find the place," said Davis. "Will you stay here, Lewis, and be ready for anything I telephone over? It won't take me many hours to locate the place to a certainty."

Davis went. Hours passed without any message from him. It was the backcoming of Davis himself that broke the suspense.

"Well?" asked Darrell, Mrs. Ferris, and Lewis, all in a breath.

"I found the house," said Davis grimly. "Or, rather, I didn't find it. There wasn't any house there."

"No house there?" exclaimed his mystified auditors.

"There had been, but it's gone. Nothing but a lot of embers, spread over several acres. People who lived a mile from there told me they heard a fearful explosion in that direction night before last. The house must have been set afire and blown up. It was the most complete wreck I ever saw."

"And King Nelson?" quivered Phil Darrell.

"Draw your own conclusions," replied Davis, his face ghastly. "It's almost too terrible to talk about."

"It looks as if we'd seen the last of poor old King Nelson," groaned Lewis.

"Missing, now, for two whole days!" gasped Mrs. Ferris.

Phil Darrell was on his feet, eyes blazing.

"You can at least run down the perpetrators of this crime, can't you?" he palpitated.

"If it can be done, we'll do it," promised Davis grimly. "But we've got a hard start, for there's not the least bit of a trail to guide us. There was a shower that washed out the least bit of trail that there might have been around the house to show us which way the murderers of our chief went."

There, on the moment, forgetting all else, the four resolved themselves into an organized effort to find and punish the murderers of King Nelson.

CHAPTER XXII.

WORSE THAN FIENDS.

For ten minutes after the departure of Ike Crawford and The Trompett, there was absolute silence.

The three captives, lying on their backs, suffering keenly still from their recent torment, looked at each other significantly from time to time.

Neither Dawson nor Reggy spoke. They waited for

their chief to set them the example, and King Nelson remained as mute as the Sphinx.

Truth to tell, his mind was far away from their present troubles. He was trying, in fact, to guess who could be the unseen one who was directing this whole ghastly performance.

A shriek, piercing and heart-rending, aroused him from his long reverie.

"Damnation! They are torturing a woman!" cried King Nelson, raising himself on his elbow and listening.

Then came another shriek, more laden with pain than the first.

"It is that wretched captive whom I tried to save," he muttered inwardly.

His face grew white with the shame of the thing that was happening in the next room.

Listening with his ear close to the floor, he could make out the voices of Ike and The Trompett, though he failed to make out the words.

Every once in a while there came, also, the smothered reply of the woman whom they were tormenting.

"The fiends!" gasped Nelson, clenching his teeth.

Shriek after shriek now rang out! It was the awful cry of a woman undergoing the acme of bodily torment.

Yet above all her pain she screamed:

"No, no, no! You shall not make me do it! Never!"

This outburst of denial was instantly followed by screams that curdled King Nelson's blood.

Struggling like a maniac, he strove to burst the chains that fettered his wrists.

"Confound the devils!" he cried. "If I could only get in there, with both hands free, for sixty seconds!"

From behind the black draperies that masked the walls came a mocking laugh.

The voices of Ike and The Trompett could be heard again. The sound was expostulatory, though the words were indistinguishable.

"No, no!" screamed the tortured wretch.

Then once more the fearful peal of pain dinned in the ears of the powerless prisoners.

"They'll kill her!" moaned the detective, under his breath.

The screams that followed were so much more pregnant with anguish that all three of the fettered listeners grew absolutely pallid with sympathy.

Then came the high-pitched, anguish-racked cry in that woman's voice:

"Go on, if you will! You may kill me, after prolonging my torture all day, but you shall never make me betray Señor Norwell!"

"Splendid courage!" breathed King Nelson, in quick admiration for that indomitable spirit.

In the next breath he thought of something else.

"Norwell, eh? At last I have my clew—the real one, beyond a doubt! I will treasure that name! If ever I get out of here——"

"We'll see how you'll stand the next step!" roared Ike Crawford's brute voice.

Apparently there was no delay in the torture.

Almost immediately the screams were renewed. Fearful as they had been before, they were threefold more awful now.

All over King Nelson's body the cold sweat of mental anguish broke out. His two companions were not less affected than himself.

Higher and higher rose the screams, without ceasing. The torment that that poor soul was undergoing must have been the most ingenious and crushing that man could devise!

"Tell! tell!" roared Ike's voice.

"Tell!" screamed The Trompett, after him.

"Never! Not even this will make me. You are powerless!"

That defiance, shouted between spasms of agony, was exultant in its ring.

"She has a will they can never subdue!" thrilled King Nelson.

Now the shrieks took on a different sound. There was hysterical laughter mixed with it—then a fearful scream in a new note.

King Nelson's wide experience enabled him to understand it in an instant.

The horror of this newest phase made his heart all but stop beating. He had been often in asylums. This awful note was as clear to him as speech in words.

"They have overshot the mark!" he gasped. "They have driven the woman mad through her hideous torment. She is raving crazy!"

There could not be a doubt of it. The woman no longer defied her tormentors. Neither did she yield. Her yells and laughter were alike hopelessly maniacal.

"Now she'll never tell us anything!" rang The Trompett's high, piercing voice. "Ike Crawford, see what you've done! You were crazy yourself, to carry your work so far!"

The awful screams of that lunacy-stricken wretch were enough to drive all the hearers out of their minds, too. Surely the Inferno can produce no more terrifying noises!

Now the sounds became more far away, gradually dying, until they ceased altogether.

"They have taken her somewhere else," murmured King Nelson. "They are punished by the fruit of their own work. You pair of fiends! Never again, after this fearful night, can either of you know anything approaching peace. Even I, who am innocent of any of this wrongdoing, feel as if I had entered Hades!"

For another quarter of an hour there was silence. After that, the curtain was pushed aside.

Ike's face, drawn and haggard, yet looking utterly satanic with evil, leered in at them.

"Well," he demanded hoarsely, "are you fellers ready for your turns? There's a great game out here waiting for you."

Past his head, The Trompett pushed hers. Though the late scene had left its traces on her face, she still looked vile and pitiless enough to be Satan's wife.

"Come on!" she cooed. "It is going to be more fun with men. They are stronger; they can stand more—and feel pain more. Come on!"

Her laughter, as she advanced into the room, made even King Nelson, stoical as he was where he alone was concerned, shudder with a new feeling of dread.

"Perhaps you're ready to talk, though?" jeered Ike, as he, too, came into the room and bent over the prostrate detective.

King Nelson looked his enemy unflinchingly in the eyes.

"Perhaps, Ike Crawford, in the next world you'll escape countless ages of torment worse than you inflicted upon that poor, miserable, but heroic, woman to-night. Perhaps you won't. What do you think?"

"Curse you!" thundered Ike. Before the words had fairly left his mouth, he was trembling to his very lips.

"You do sometimes think of the next world, eh?" leered the detective. "You don't know what's ahead of you there—but you do know that every one of your black crimes must add to your torments after death. Oh, yes, you know it!"

With the cry of a frenzied beast, Ike reached out his hands for King Nelson's throat. Just then, however, he drew back, a new gleam of interest shining in his eyes.

"Where did you get those teeth marks in your throat?" he asked hoarsely. "I chewed a man's throat in just that fashion a little way back. But that was George Maculam, of the central office, and you're not the man."

"Sure of that?" asked Nelson indifferently.

The question made Ike Crawford start and look closer.

"No," he said finally, with a vigorous shake of the head, "you look no more like him than I do."

"Then the marks on my throat can't be your work."

"Of course not," assented Ike. "But I'd like to know who the artist is whose work looks so blamed much like mine."

"I'll tell you some day."

"When?"

"When you've reformed and are leading an honest life."

"When will that be?" laughed Ike uneasily.

"When your carcass is rotting in the grave, the worms feeding on you; when the real Ike Crawford is in the next world, an honest man at last because he will be paying the full debt of all his crimes."

It would be impossible to depict the terror that this taunt, coldly and cuttingly delivered, brought out on the strangler's face. He was an ignorant and superstitious rascal. There were moments when his nerves were shaken that he shuddered with terror over the thought of the next world.

"Curse you!" he yelled again, rising and striking at Nelson with his heavy foot.

The blow landed upon the detective's ribs, almost depriving him of breath.

Yet, as soon as Nelson could articulate the words, he went on:

"I heard once how Satan sets his mark on his greatest favorites whom he is to claim. If they are white men, five days before their death their faces suddenly turn as black as that of a negro."

Ike's features were still as dark as ebony from the trick King Nelson had played upon him. It would be another week before the color would wear off.

Crawford had been inclined to attribute this freak of his skin to some species of witchcraft by The Trompett.

Now, however, his ignorant mind began to see new light, though he tried to shake off the sinister thought with a laugh.

"You think you're scaring me?" he jeered.

"No, merely telling you what I read in your face."

"Bosh!"

"Within a very few days, strong and powerful as you are to-night, you will be dead!"

King Nelson's voice rang with the sincerity of an awful prophecy. He was a splendid actor. He could see in an instant that his words had taken most of the heart out of Ike. King Nelson enjoyed the sight. He felt that he was, in some degree, punishing the brute for the murder of that hapless woman's intellect.

"Ss-ss-sst!" It was that summoning signal from the directing mind behind the curtain.

Leaping at the sound as a drowning man clutches at even a scrap of paper, Ike went close to the curtain.

A conversation followed in low whispers, inaudible to the three prisoners.

But when Ike came back, he looked a trifle more dogged.

"Enough of your monkeyshines," he said, with more gruffness than he had been able to muster a minute before. "Now, we'll soon see how much sand you three fellers have. Trompett, held me to lift this prophet and take him into the next room."

The Trompett obeyed with alacrity, seizing the detective's feet, while Ike lifted at the head. They bore Nelson into the next room, which, like the first, had its ceilings and walls draped with black cloth.

They laid Nelson upon the floor. The first thing he saw was a pool of blood on the floor under a curious, suggestive-looking machine.

From that, his gaze traveled to the machine itself. It was simple, yet diabolical looking. In the center was a low table, braced on heavy legs. At either end of the table was a stout wheel, to the rim of each of which was attached a turning handle.

Reggy and Dawson were placed on the floor beside their chief.

"Now," began Ike, trying to affect a brisk, businesslike tone, as he looked over the trio, "who's first? I reckon you claim the privilege," he added, letting his grinning gaze rest at last upon Nelson. "Would you rather talk, now, and answer all our questions, or shall we put you up on—that?"

He pointed to the table.

Allan Nelson remained silent.

"Up with him, then," counseled The Trompett, grabbing the detective's feet. Ike seized him under the shoulders. Bump! They let him down on the table with jarring force. With no more gentleness they turned him over on his face.

Seizing the victim's manacled hands, Ike lashed them securely to the rim of one of the wheels. The Trompett fastened his feet to the other wheel.

"Maybe you won't talk at once," suggested Ike knowingly, "but you'll be glad to, before long. When we turn the wheels, it pulls your arms one way, your legs the other. Then you begin to feel the strain. Another twist or two, and you hear your bones snap. You're crippled then, and, remember, we ain't got no doctor here to set bones. If you get that far, there's no help for it."

Ike waited a moment, to let the full meaning of his words sink into the victim's mind.

"Do you give in? Will you talk?" he demanded at last.

"King Nelson's answer was short, direct:

"You cowardly fool!"

Crawford sprang to one of the wheels, the woman bounding to the other.

"Give her a couple of turns, Trompett, old girl!" shouted Ike.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BRAIN AGAINST BRUTE.

With a snort of wrath, The Trompett gave a turn at one wheel.

Ike did the same at the other.

A strain of fearful anguish went through King Nelson's frame from end to end.

It was as if wild horses were pulling him apart.

Gritting his teeth, he bore the awful torment, not rewarding his torturers by so much as a groan.

"Stop it!" commanded Ike.

As he let go of the wheel at which he stood, The Trompett did the same at her post.

"How do you like it?" asked Crawford, leering at his victim.

No reply came from the detective.

"Guess you're willing to talk now, ain't you?" insisted the strangler.

Nelson's silence continued. So did his torture, for, though the wheels had slipped back so that the strain did not continue, every bone and muscle in his body ached.

"Come," commanded Ike, "talk up! Smoke! If you don't, you'll get plenty more of this dose. It takes a heap of it to wear the wheels out. I've known people to give out under this sort of thing."

Nelson, with his eyes on the floor, bit his lips to keep back the savage answer that rose to his lips.

"Ain't a-going to talk, eh?" asked Ike, when the silence from the tortured one had become monotonous. "Well, that's just as you please. Only you're giving yourself a heap more pain than you need to stand, for you're going to talk before we get through with you."

King Nelson remained as mute as before.

"Nothing to say—is that it?"

Ike waited what he deemed a suitable interval, then turned to his partner at the foot of the machine.

"Once more, Trompett! Two turns this time."

They applied the torture in unison, each giving two full turns of the wheel. King Nelson felt as if human bones and muscles could not stand much more of this keen agony. A third turn, he was convinced, would make the muscles snap and the bones crack.

For fully thirty seconds they held the wheels as they were, until their victim believed that hell could hold no torment more acute.

On his brow, great drops of ice-cold perspiration stood out. He could not quiver—the tension was too great for that!

Oh, for the relief of one good groan! He felt as if it would ease the pain.

But it would also be a confession of weakness. Out of sheer stubbornness, he kept his lips mute.

"Ease up!" directed Ike.

As the wheels slid back, and the awful tension slackened, one great excruciating throb shot through the detective's frame. He understood now—or thought he did—what had caused the woman to go out of her head some minutes ago. He felt equally certain that, under this treatment, his own brain, dominated by a masterful will though it was, must yield. It was but a question of a little more endurance.

Walking over to the corner of the room, Ike snatched up a lantern, turned up its wick a trifle, and returned to the machine.

Throwing himself upon the floor on his knees, Ike held the light so that he could peer into the detective's face. His own evil features were distorted until they looked satanic. He saw the suffering in every line of King Nelson's face, and laughed with glee at the sight.

"Oh, you're a brave one!" jeered Crawford. "You ain't making any noise, and you hope I'll soon believe I'm wasting my time. But I know better! This ain't the first time I've seen stubborn ones give in on these wheels. For, if you hold out long enough, we won't stop until you're past doctor's help!"

"As you did with the woman?" asked King Nelson, speaking for the first time since the torture had begun.

"What do you know about her?" demanded Ike.

"More, perhaps, than you think. You acted toward her like a fiend."

"Just as we're going to act with you, if you dare us to," grinned Ike.

"You're wasting your time."

"We'll see about that."

"This is not the first time I've faced death."

"Maybe not."

"In fact, I'm used to it."

"That's for you to say," replied Ike, not removing his glance from Nelson's face.

"One time more will make no difference."

"But this will be the last time."

"Then I shall the sooner be out of the bad world."

"Anxious to go, eh?" leered Ike.

"The prospect doesn't scare me at all. Do you know why?"

"'Fraid I don't."

"No, you're not likely to," retorted King Nelson, with cool contempt. "You don't know what a clean conscience feels like. The next world means, for you, something worse than this machine you've got me strapped to, with a fiend far smarter than you applying the torture. And it'll be worse in your case, for no matter how you weaken, no matter how willing you are to talk or pray, there won't be any let-up for you. It'll go on night and day, until you'll wish that souls could die. You——"

"Stop that!" hoarsely cried Ike, starting up in a frenzy.

"Oh, it's true, and you needn't try not to think of it. You'll soon have nothing else to think about."

"Stop that talk, I tell you!"

But King Nelson was not likely to stop. He had found the weakest part in Ike's armor of wickedness, and enjoyed piercing it to the utmost. Crawford was superstitious. Before as convincing a speaker as King Nelson, he could be made to suffer, in mind, all the torments of the damned. King Nelson took a malicious delight in driving in the knife and turning it around.

The Trompett laughed, but it was a scared laugh.

Yet that laugh nerved Ike for the moment, because it made him ashamed of his weakness before a woman.

"Come, sister, we'll give him more of it," proposed Ike. "That's the quickest way to stop his croaking."

"Hurry up, then," cackled The Trompett, "or you'll end up, Ike, by making a break from here and legging it to the nearest Sunday school."

Ike scowled, making a gesture which the woman understood. In a twinkling, they freed the detective from the two wheels, flopping him over on his back. In this position, they again secured his wrists and ankles to the wheels.

"Feel like giving in, before we go further?" propounded the strangler.

"Not a give!"

"At it, then, sister!"

"Ss-ss-sst!"

At that warning signal, both let go of the wheel handles just as they started to turn.

Ike darted over to one of the black curtains, with his ear close, listening.

King Nelson felt that he would have endured a dozen turns on the wheel as the price of hearing what was being said.

Yet, though he strained his ears to their acutest sense, he could hear nothing but an incoherent series of sibilant sounds.

"All right," said Ike audibly, at last.

Quitting the curtain, he glided back to the machine, seized the handle of his wheel at the head, and said tersely:

"Two turns, sister!"

The Trompett gave them with a will. So did Ike

"Block your wheel!" he next commanded.

Though the woman and Crawford stepped back from their posts, the wheels did not, this time, give back to their original positions.

That fearful strain kept up. King Nelson felt his senses reeling. It would have been very much like a relief to have had his brain give way in that awful moment.

Snatching up the lantern, Ike held it very close to the sufferer's head, chuckling as he recognized the tight lines of suffering there.

"Trompett," said Ike, without putting down the light, "bring me the persuader."

The woman went out of the room, returning with a sledge hammer. As she held it out to him, Ike took it, passing her the lantern.

"Here's the next hand in the game," went on Crawford grimly, as he poised the hammer. "I ask you once to give in. If you don't, down comes the hammer. One of your arms is broken. I ask you twice. If you hold out, then the other arm goes snap! Next your legs. Understand?"

"Yes."

"Give in?"

"No, for you'll never strike the first blow. You can't. You're a doomed man, Ike Crawford! I told you that, when the devil wants one of his very own, he turns the wretch's face black just beforehand. Ike, your moment has come! I can see what you can't. At this very second, the devil hovers over you, laughing. He is ready to claim you. See his hands reaching out to clutch you! Strike now, if you can! You can't! Ah, he has got you. You are reeling—dying!"

It is impossible to describe the fearful fervor with which King Nelson uttered those words. They sank like shafts of steel into the heart and brain of the superstitious strangler.

His lips parted, his eyes were staring. He shook in every fiber of his evil body.

Down went his arms, powerless. The hammer fell from his hands to the ground. Not even the steady succession of hailing hisses that came from the other side of the curtain served to draw Ike Crawford from what he believed to be his death scene.

Up to his brow went his hands. His breath came in short, fearful gasps.

From his lips came a faint shriek, as if he already fancied himself entering the regions of perpetual punishment.

"Get out!" sneered The Trompett, though she herself was shaking more than she would have admitted.

The words recalled Ike, ever so little. Reeling, groping like a stricken man, he found his way to the curtain, passed behind it, and King Nelson heard his body thud to the floor on the other side.

No word—not a groan, no sound of any kind—came from the stricken one.

"Ike! Ike, you fool!" bawled The Trompett.

Still no sound. The silence was sepulchral.

But the woman was made of a little sterner stuff.

"You scared him—he's a baby!" jeered the woman scornfully.

"No! He's gone to his reward—or is going!" said the detective solemnly.

Not even his two helpless companions, bound and looking on, could appreciate the heroic grit that was necessary to enable him to speak calmly under that long drawn-out torture of stretching until it seemed as if the bones would break.

Uttering a snarl of wrath, The Trompett seized the hammer, swinging it, intent on delivering a blow without parley.

But King Nelson's words arrested her.

"Woman, that same devil is behind you, now! I can see him reaching for you. Feel his hands tightening at your throat! You are going to strangle to death!"

With a shriek, she let the hammer fall to the floor. Strange as it was, she actually felt fingers of fire around her neck. It was partly hypnotism. Unstrung nerves and superstition did the rest.

"Woman, if you would breathe," rang King Nelson's admonishing voice, "loose these wheels. Then run for your life. In that way you may escape the devil!"

"Ss-ss-sst! Ss-ss-sst! Ss-ss-ss-ss-sst!" sounded the call frantically, from behind the curtain.

But The Trompett no longer heeded her unseen chief. Uncatching the cogs, she fled shrieking with terror from the room.

As the released wheels flew back, releasing their racking tension, King Nelson enjoyed the comparative comfort of a cessation of the torment.

"Both helpers scared off!" he mused grimly to himself. "Well, now I shall have one satisfaction. There is no one left to torment me but the chief of this fiendish outfit. I at least have the satisfaction of knowing that I shall see the leader himself!"

TO BE CONTINUED.

INDIAN SUPERSTITION.

The Indians believe that if the stillness over the waters of a lake be broken by any careless word the spirits of the place will be offended. In the days of the early settlers, we are told, a white woman had occasion to cross Lake Saratoga, and the Indians, who were to row her across, warned her of the danger that one rash word might bring.

It was a calm, cloudless day, and the canoe sped like an arrow across the smooth waters. Suddenly, when in the middle of the lake, the strong-minded woman determined to prove to these simple folk the folly of their belief. So she lifted up her voice in a wild cry that woke every echo of the hills.

The Indians were filled with consternation. They uttered no word, but, straining every nerve, rowed on in

frowning silence. They reached the shore in safety, and the woman triumphed; but the Mohawk looked upon her in scorn.

"The Great Spirit is merciful," he said. "He knows that the white woman cannot hold her peace."

A BUTTING MATCH.

By H. V. ERALD.

They were a rough, stony-fisted group of pioneer woodsmen, who had gathered in front of the one little family grocery, barroom, and general merchandise store combined, for their morning bitters, and a little game of draw poker. Among the number was old "Uncle" Sam Heath, a burly negro.

John F. Saunders, proprietor of the grocery, always kept a good supply of what was known in those days as "Dexter's Best," and he was liberal in dispensing it to his friends and patrons, but the crowd in front of his store that morning comprised a party that had done more drinking than paying, and knowing how impossible it would be to deny them drink or collect any revenue, he determined to disappoint them by getting out of the way and leaving the door locked.

"Tom," said Uncle Sam, "go and ask Jane for the key," when the crowd had tired of waiting.

Mrs. Saunders lived but thirty steps from the store, and Tom soon returned, but without the key.

"What shall we do?" asked Uncle Sam. "I'm thirsty, and I must liquor, if I have to butt that door down. Will you stand by me, boys?"

"Stand by you and drink by you," was the speedy and energetic response, "and if necessary fight by you."

"Clear the way," said Uncle Sam, as he measured forty paces and fixed his eyes on the door.

When the boys saw Uncle Sam preparing for the attack upon the grocery, they set up a cheering that frightened Mrs. Saunders, and caused her to call in the children and lock the door.

"Make it ten yards more."

"Get a good start, Uncle Sam. Make the distance fifty yards," said several voices, and as the old man moved back and eyed the ground, the shouts and cheers became deafening.

"Ready?" asked the crowd.

"Ready," replied Uncle Sam.

"Go!" said the leader, and away he started.

With his head bent and his arms akimbo, Uncle Sam moved toward the door, slowly at first, but gathered speed as he moved along, until about halfway, when he was at a full run, urged on by such cheering as had never before been heard on Bayou Mason.

He struck the door very heavily with his head, but it still remained firm on its hinges. Uncle Sam picked himself up, clapped his hands to his head, rubbed his bloodshot eyes, and looked lonely and depressed. His companions gathered around to sympathize with him, but he surprised them by crying out determinedly:

"Stand away, boys; give me more room and fresh air, and I'll bring the door down this time or give it a congestive shake."

This time he measured sixty yards, bowed his head and started.

He bounded back from the door like a rubber ball, his eyes glistened like fire, seeming ready to pop from their sockets. His pulse beat fast, and his breathing kept pace with his pulse. He clapped both hands to his temples and cried hoarsely for water. A basin was brought, his head bathed, and a stream of water went splashing down his back.

"Did she budge?"

"Yes, sir, the hinges cracked and the door trembled."

"Cracked, did she?"

"Fairly shook, sir."

"All right, boys," and Uncle Sam looked more determined than ever.

The water had cooled his temples, and he arose, stretched himself to his full height, struck his breast a heavy, exultant blow, and remarked:

"I feel as if I could butt brick walls now if a jug of whisky was inside. Stand back, give me room, and keep quiet, and I'll make hash out of that door."

This time he measured off eighty paces, paused an instant to nerve himself for the exertion, started off at a rapid pace, and struck the door, headforemost, with all his might and with such momentum that locks and hinges burst like brittle glass, and Uncle Sam fell sprawling on the floor inside.

"Drink hearty, boys," said Uncle Sam. "It's only one-third water and two-thirds whisky, for I have noticed a gradual decline in the bayou since that barrel arrived."

They did drink hearty, and when the proprietor, who had noted the proceedings from his place of concealment, arrived, there was no need of his saying, "Help yourselves, boys." They were already doing that.

The next day there was a funeral on Bayou Mason, and Uncle Sam rode in the front carriage. The doctor said it was brain fever, but it made short work of poor old Uncle Sam.

TOO MUCH FOR THE ECHO.

Some years ago a remarkably fine echo was discovered on a gentleman's estate. He was proud of it, of course, and excited considerable envy by its exhibition.

A retired merchant who owned an adjoining estate felt especially chagrined, but was greatly encouraged by an Irishman who went over the land with the hope of discovering one somewhere. He declared himself successful in discovering the most wonderful echo ever heard, and stood ready to unfold his secret for a consideration. The owner of the estate listened to the echo, and, although there was something peculiar about it, he paid the money, and an afternoon was appointed for his friends to come and listen to the marvelous discovery.

"Hello!" cried the stentorian tones of the Hibernian, who had promised to find an echo.

"Hello!" came back from the hillside.

"How are you?" yelled one of the company, and echo answered in a suspiciously different key: "How are you?"

All went well until just before retiring, when one of the company, putting his hands to his mouth, cried out:

"Will you have some whisky?"

Such a question would disclose the character of any reasonable echo. It was certainly too much for this one. Judge of the surprise of the party when the answer came back in clear tones:

"Thank you, sorr; I will, if ye please."

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Japanese Girl Topples Over Cop.

A 110-pound girl smilingly toppling a husky officer on the floor. That was the sight witnessed by policemen who attended an exhibition given at the city hall, at Philadelphia, Pa., by Miss Ai Kishi, for the benefit of Philadelphia's bluecoats.

"I felt like a pygmy in the grasp of a giant," said the big lieutenant who was Miss Kishi's victim.

The pretty Japanese girl is an expert at jujutsu. She is not yet 20 and looks as dainty as a doll, but she understands Japanese wrestling so well that she can "handle" anybody. A fighter or strong man has as little chance with a jujutsu expert as a snowball has on a hot stove. A master of this science can by a slight, swift movement benumb a victim's brain, dislocate his hip or shoulder, twist or burst a tendon, or break an ankle. If the Philadelphia police ever learn the tricks they saw they will need no clubs.

Freak Sea Animal Landed.

A negro fisherman caught a freak sea fish at Gulfport, Miss., when he landed a hideous creature about ten inches long, four inches wide, and two inches thick. Its body is oval and rounded at the head and tail. It has teeth like a cow and sharp needles on its back. Its skin is tough though not scaled. It is equipped with fins on its sides and at the tail.

Crime Wave in Chicago.

Police figures for the four months ending April 30 show an increase in crime in Chicago over any similar period in the history of the police department.

Since January 1 500 "holdup" robberies have been reported, the victims reporting losses of about $10,000. There were 2,000 burglaries of flats, residences, and stores, amounting to $250,000. Horses and wagons and merchandise valued at $10,000 were reported stolen. About 400 automobiles were reported stolen, but in nearly every case the machine was found abandoned after having been stripped.

Fish Too Large for Pelican.

While watching a flock of pelicans John Ellis, a farmer, near Atchison, Kan., noticed that one of the birds was unable to keep up with the others. When it had lagged several hundred yards behind the flock, it was seen to drop something, and then it quickly caught up with its fellows. The object was found to be a buffalo fish weighing eight pounds.

After Thirty-three Years Oil Flows.

An oil well on the E. D. Bennett Farm, near Ellicottville, N. Y., has started a good flow after being dry for 33 years. The well was abandoned soon after being drilled as it did not look promising.

Machine "Cans" Sheet Music.

E. E. Allen, of Sherman, Ga., has invented a machine for the manufacture of perforated sheet music. It is very complicated and is made up of nearly 3,000 pieces. The machine will make music rolls of tunes to be used on automatic pianos and music boxes. Various attachments will give music as from an orchestra, drum, piano, or any other instrument.

Baby's Bite Fatal to Doctor.

The bite of a baby diphtheria patient to whom he was administering antitoxin three months ago resulted in the death by blood poisoning of Doctor Julius Cæsar Lauer, at New York. He was in a local hospital for several weeks prior to his death.

Can Test Silk With Match.

Scientists of the University of Wisconsin have been conducting a course of study of fabrics and one of their discoveries is that real silk can be distinguished from the adulterated article by a simple test. A bit of silk and a match are all that the purchaser needs. Light the match and apply it to the fabric. If the silk holds its shape it is adulterated with some of the various minerals so used. If it melts down in burning and runs together in a puffy mass the silk is pure.

Dog Leads Way on Dangerous Road.

Led by his faithful dog, "Watch," a collie, "Blind" Rorie, who has been unable to see for several years, tramped thirty-six miles to Onia, Ark., to Mountain View and back. The road traveled by the dog and his blind master is crooked and dangerous.

Lonesome Dog Ends Own Life.

A dog sent to Manset, Me., from New Hampshire after the death of its master refused to eat. He made frequent trips to the sea wall where he howled dismally. One day, making his way to a rocky point, he stood looking seaward for a few minutes, and then jumped into the breakers. He has not been seen since.

She Weighs Less at 30 than at 1.

Inez Goulding, of Perry, Me., is 30 years old, but she weighs less than she did twenty-nine years ago. When she was one year old she weighed 140 pounds and was exhibited as a mammoth baby in a tent at the county fair. However, she never grew any more, and, in fact, has lost some of her flesh. To-day she is a normal American woman and weighs a little less than 130 pounds.

Paper Good as its Editor.

"The newspaper does not rise above its editor," said Chester S. Lord, formerly managing editor of the New York *Sun*, in a public address recently before the University Press Club, at Princeton.

"The editor indicates the paper's policy and the paper is just what he makes it. If the editor stands for honesty and integrity his paper will be an expression of high ideals."

Advising prospective newspaper men, Mr. Lord said:

"To be successful you must have widespread information, but if in addition to this you will master a specialty or two you will find yourself at great advantage over

your fellow workers, for in the newspaper office the man who knows the most about a given topic is the man called on to write about that topic."

Among the specialties he ranked politics first, saying:

"Conspicuously above all newspaper specialties let me put politics, and next to politics, in my opinion, comes finance. In a sense they go together, for have we not seen that politics has to be financed, and that finance is at the mercy of politics? Each in itself is most important, and together they control the world. Of politics there is no end; never has been, never will be."

As to the value of the newspaper to-day Mr. Lord said: "The reading of newspapers has come to be an absolute essential in the daily routine of every intelligent person. The things taught by the newspaper are the things of the moment."

Chicago Deports a Leper.

Charles Wolgren, a leper, who had been at the Cook County Hospital, Chicago, for two months, was placed aboard a steamship recently in New York. He is bound for Sweden, his native land. Wolgren was conveyed to New York in a special car hired by the Chicago authorities. His departure was kept secret. Special permits were issued by the governors of States through which the train passed.

Wolgren came to America several years ago and took out preliminary naturalization papers. He returned to Sweden later and then came back to America again, visiting Alaska and Western points. He was taken to the County Hospital from South Chicago, where he was employed last winter.

Differ on Boxing Weights.

The New York State athletic commission recently considered the status of the proposed international boxing union, which has been hanging fire for some time. Several months ago "Snowy" Baker, the Australian boxing promoter, was in conference with the commission, and was authorized to treat with the foreign representatives on behalf of the New York men.

The commission received Baker's report, which set out that the principal differences between the nations concerned the matter of the weight; on all other questions the conferees are not far apart, but the foreigners are insistent upon the English rather than the American standard of weights.

The attitude of the commission and of American sporting men generally is one of compromise, uniformity being the main thing. The English classes are a trifle heavier than the American, but four pounds in the paperweight class is the widest divergence, with three additional pounds in the bantams.

It is proposed to hold an international meeting in June at Geneva, Switzerland, for the settling of all outstanding differences. This meeting would be attended by representatives from all boxing nations, with the French taking the in initiative.

A license was granted to the Chenango County Athletic Club and several complains were heard. An inspector reported that "Knock-out" Sweeney and Tommy Maloney had refused to weigh in and be examined before their recent match, at the Collar City Athletic Club in Troy. All parties were summoned before the commission for the next meeting. Donnelly, the owner of the Olympic Athletic Club, came before the commission on a charge of having acted as a referee without a referee's card. He explained that he had found it necessary to stop a match in which one of the contestants was being badly beaten, but that he had not intended to violate the rule that the referee is in sole charge of the ring. He was merely warned.

New Italian Peace Treaty.

Secretary Bryan and Marquis Cusani Confalonieri, Italian ambassador, recently signed a treaty providing that any question between the United States and Italy which cannot be settled by diplomacy shall be submitted for investigation to an international commission of five members.

The period of investigation is fixed at one year, although it may be shortened. The treaty follows in a general way the terms of a similar agreement negotiated by Secretary Bryan with The Netherlands. It is the fifteenth of the new Bryan peace treaties. No provision is made for the maintenance of the status quo of military and naval preparation during the period of investigation, as in some of the previous conventions.

West Point for New York.

The large gathering of army officers at the West Point dinner at the Hotel Astor, in New York, recently, took a decided stand on the question of the place for the Army-Navy football game next November. To a man the army was in favor of New York, and during the dinner the officers passed a resolution that every member of the army would do all in his power to have the game played in New York.

The game, as played at the Polo Grounds last fall, was the biggest spectacle the two service schools have ever participated in, but the Navy is anxious to have the game played in Philadelphia again.

The resolution as passed by the army officers was as follows:

"It is the unanimous opinion of the graduates of the United States Military Academy, in session at New York on March 16, that New York City is the ideal and logical place for the Army-Navy football game. We so express ourselves and pledge ourselves to use all our efforts in that behalf."

Crucify 250 Captives.

Two hundred and fifty Mohammedan Albanians, captured by the Epirote invaders at Hormova, Albania, were crucified in the orthodox church at Kodra, according to information received by the Albanian government.

The Epirotes afterward set fire to the church and allowed the bodies to burn, it is said.

To the Pole by Aeroplane.

Captain Roald Amundsen has completed a course of tuition as an aërial pilot at the Johannesthal Aërodrome, Germany.

He expects to take two aëroplanes in the *Fram* on his polar expedition next year, and, after going as far as possible by sea, to reach the pole by air route.

Irrigation by Electricity.

Electric-power transmission lines are being constructed throughout the beet-growing country of the Arkansas River Valley in Kansas for the purpose of carrying the

current to motor-driven pumps, which will supply water for the irrigation ditches of the country. Electric plants in Garden City, Holly, Deerfield, and other towns furnish the power for operating the pumps.

National Balloon Race.

The national balloon race for this year will be sailed from St. Louis on July 4. The Aëro Club of America awarded this contest recently to the Aëro Club of St. Louis. The winner of this race and the pilot who finishes second will be two of the three aëronauts to represent the United States in the international race to start from Kansas City next October. The third American pilot will be Ralph H. Upson, winner of the international flight from Paris last year.

It was almost an eleventh-hour decision which gave the national contest to St. Louis. Representatives of the Aëro Club in Portland, Ore., had looked forward to staging the start of this race and the Aëro Club in Oakland, Cal., also had bid for the race. A telegram of sanction was sent to A. B. Lambert, vice president of the St. Louis club.

The board of governors of the Aëro Club of America took into consideration the fact that St. Louis has had experience in holding national races; that it has the finest of facilities for a balloon flight, especially in furnishing gas, and that the city is centrally located geographically. The award was made notwithstanding that the St. Louis club offered only $2,000 in prizes and the aëronauts' expenses, as compared with $3,000 and expenses by the Portland club, and $3,500 and expenses by the Oakland club.

Ralph H. Upson recently accepted the invitation of the Aëro Club of America to represent the United States. The decision to hold a national race to select the other two American pilots was reached after a mail vote taken among the leading aëronauts of the country. Upson last October covered 550 miles in the balloon *Goodyear*, finishing in Hull, England. His victory brought the 1914 international flight to the United States. H. Honeywell, an American pilot, who finished second last year, recently declined an invitation to represent the United States in the coming international race.

Left All to Benefactors.

For their "kindness and self-sacrifice," Mr. and Mrs. George Smith, of Sunbury, Pa., inherit nearly $8,000 under the will of John Fell, 80, a beggar. The will was probated shortly before relatives of Fell arrived to contest the document.

Fell, who was believed to be almost penniless, went to the home of the Smiths, and asked for shelter. He said he was friendless, that he felt ill, and believed he was going to die. Although the Smiths had only one bed they gave it to the old man, and themselves slept on the floor.

The next day Mrs. Smith said Fell gave her a check for $507 on a Northumberland bank and $55 in cash. Before he died he made a will, leaving to the Smiths his entire estate, said to consist of $7,000 in a Wilkes-Barre bank and stocks valued at $800.

Bar Boxers Over Forty.

An age limit for contestants in boxing bouts was set recently by the New York State athletic commission. In the future no man above 40 years of age will be allowed to take part in a boxing contest in this State. This provision was made as an amendment to the previous rule regarding the age of contestants.

The fight now being made by Bob Fitzsimmons for permission to box in New York is one of the reasons for adopting the rule, but the commissioners declared that it was not aimed at any particular boxer. Recently a boxer known as the "Fighting Parson," and said to be almost 60 years of age, was not allowed to take part in a bout at the New Polo A. A. Other veterans have announced their willingness to come back into the ring, and the commission decided to pass a rule to cover all cases rather than to deal with each as it comes up. The rule will eliminate exhibition bouts between old-timers, as well as any attempts at regular boxing.

James Coffroth, the California promoter, was in conference with the members of the State athletic commission in regard to the plan to reach a working agreement between all States where boxing flourishes. Coffroth is much in favor of the idea, as well as the attempt to standardize weights and recognize penalties, and he promised to work along these lines on the coast, where the game is stronger than in any other part of the country.

Bank Robber Killed by Posse.

A man named Parks was shot and killed by a posse of citizens near Willis, Texas, after he had robbed the Willis Bank of $4,000 and forced the cashier, Sam Beard, junior, who was alone, to walk before him to the city limits. After reaching the outskirts of the city, the bandit released Beard, who returned to the city and gave the alarm.

Rich "Sniper" Slain for His Treachery.

Juan Martinez, Spaniard of aristocratic birth and breeding, and graduate of Cornell University at Ithaca, N. Y., stood on a high balcony under a boiling sun and watched the seizure of Vera Cruz by the American forces. The men whom he saw passing through the streets in long, even ranks wore the uniforms of a nation with which he carried on an extensive and prosperous business. They wore the uniforms of a nation at one of whose great educational institutions he had received his education; of a nation from among whose women he had chosen his wife.

In his left hand Juan Martinez held a book. It was held in such a position that it served to obscure what was grasped in his right hand. Hatred was in the heart of Martinez—a black, unreasoning hatred that found its origin somewhere in his blood—and from time to time he raised what was clasped in his right hand and drove a bullet from his balcony after the ranks of blue and khaki.

There were friends in Vera Cruz who suspected what Martinez was doing and who thought they could lay their hands on one "sniper," if they cared to. These sought him out and spoke to him seriously. He merely smiled, admitting nothing, and on the next day he sat on his balcony in an easy-chair, with his book and cigarette as before.

He read diligently between shots, and almost fooled the shrewd young United States officer who burst upon him from the rear so suddenly as barely to allow him time to conceal his weapon.

The officer had heard of Juan Martinez and what he

said to him was calculated to make the Spaniard's hot blood leap more furiously. Yet when he departed, the shrewd young officer was only half convinced of what he had at first believed to be the case. With his company he proceeded down the street with his usual caution, for the "snipers" were still dangerous.

From somewhere behind and above came the spiteful crack of an "automatic," and a man reeled, staggered, and pitched into the arms of a comrade. The young officer wheeled quickly. On the balcony he had recently quitted sat Martinez. He was reading his book studiously. From behind the volume rose a faint wisp of smoke.

"Thompson," said the young officer to his best marksman, "do you see that fellow on the balcony there? I want you to shoot him. Don't kill him—just hit him!"

Thompson fired. Juan Martinez's cherished volume tumbled from his hand. He wavered and slid from his chair to the floor of the balcony. The young officer and a squad of men went back to the house. They found Martinez sprawled on his face on his balcony. A new "automatic" lay where it had dropped from his paralyzed fingers.

Martinez some hours later died in the hospital. When his American wife heard the story, her face was white and rigid.

"I adored my husband," she said, "and my heart is broken, but if what you say is true—I am satisfied."

Boy Tastes Food for First Time in Three Years.

The taste of food was a strange sensation to Robert Hoffman, six years old, of Pittsburgh, Pa., when he ate his first meal in three years. During that period the lad had not lacked for nourishment, because he was fed through a tube inserted in the side of his stomach. After a treatment which, the boy's father says, cost $15,000, the doctors removed the tube and told Robert to eat whatever he wished.

Despite the fact that he has been nourished only by liquids for many months, the boy is in splendid health. Three years ago, Robert swallowed a quantity of cleansing lye while playing in the kitchen of his father's restaurant. In two days the canals leading to his stomach and his throat were completely closed.

He could not swallow saliva enough for digestion, so the doctors had to take the stomach out and wash the lye from it. When they put it back, a rubber tube was inserted with a valve on the outer end of it. Robert was placed under anæsthetics forty-five times.

Say Crows Spread Cholera.

By a recent act of the county board of supervisors, at Elkader, Iowa, the crow has been classed with the rattlesnake, gopher, wolf, and ground hog, and a bounty has been placed on its head. Every man who carries the head and feet of a crow into the county auditor's office during the next three months and swears the bird was killed in Clayton County, will receive ten cents. The crow has been condemned to death on

Prairie Schooner Makes Long Trip.

Several old settlers of Houston, Texas, paused on Main Street, rubbed their eyes, opened them again, and decided they were not "seeing visions," but that a real "prairie schooner" of the old-fashioned type, mule team and all, was trekking southward along Main Street. Some of the older pioneers could close their eyes and again see the arid plains of mosquite, with here and there in the long hills a cowboy.

But this "prairie schooner" was real, and was rigged up last February by Lemuel Hardwick, a southeastern Ohio farmer, who since February has been slowly traveling across the country from the foothills of Muskingum County, Ohio, toward Aldine, in Brazoria County, where he expects to settle and engage in dairy farming. With Hardwick on the trip were his wife, two sons, and a baby girl of less than a year.

The little family encountered eighteen degrees below zero while crossing Missouri, and ran into a bad storm and floods in Oklahoma, but Hardwick declares he accomplished what he set out to do, find health. He said that both his wife and himself had been in ill health, and that he had feared a touch of tuberculosis, but that both had gained in weight on the trip, and that the baby had become a "bouncer" through the outdoor life.

Hardwick said it might have been different when the country was not populated, but he doesn't think the pioneer settlers encountered such great hardships in driving across the plains in their "carts."

Mexico Source of Gum.

A blockade of Mexican seaports would be likely to cause a stringency in the "chewing-gum market." Recent statistics published by the department of commerce show that during the last year the United States imported 13,401,316 pounds of chicle, which is the sap of the sapote tree, boiled into a gum. It forms the bases for virtually all the chewing gum used in the United States.

As Mexico, especially the region about Vera Cruz, is the source of supply for much of this chicle, a shortage undoubtedly would result from a blockade. Conservative estimates place the number of gum chewers in the United States at 10,000,000, and a wail of stupendous proportions would go up if their supply were suddenly cut off, materially reduced, or the price raised.

It is estimated that 300,000,000 packages of gum are sold annually in America, each containing five pieces. These placed end to end, would extend a distance of 71,025 miles, or two and one-half times around the globe.

Edison Bans Cigarettes.

When the 6,700 employees of the Edison plants, at West Orange, N. J., entered the shops one morning recently, they were confronted on every side with printed signs bearing this warning:

: Cigarettes NOT TOLERATED. They :
: Dull the Brain. :

As a result of correspondence with Henry Ford, the Detroit automobile manufacturer, Thomas A. Edison decided to be a crusader against the cigarette. At the request of Mr. Ford, Mr. Edison made an analysis of at least twenty brands of cigarettes. While he found the tobacco contained in them was of all qualities, he found poisonous matter in all the papers in which they were rolled. Said Mr. Edison:

"That poison attacks the brain and works havoc with a man's mental activity. His mind becomes clouded. Evaristo Madero, brother of the late President of Mex-

ico, told here a few days ago that men, women, and children are inveterate smokers of cigarettes in the southern republic. That is why Mexicans as a race are not clear-headed."

Mr. Edison has always abhorred cigarettes, but he is a heavy smoker of cigars, and he likes to chew tobacco.

"Joy Riders" Trapped by this Invention.

Plans are being made to introduce in this country a device for the trapping of automobile "joy riders," which is being successfully used in Europe. Each automobile, whether private or for hire, is furnished with a sealed box containing cards, with the license number of the car, and the owner's name and address. When the automobile exceeds the speed limit, an attachment opens the box, and the cards drop into the road.

In Poland, where the device was first tested, the public looked for the cards, owing to indignation which has been caused by many automobile accidents, and arrests soon put a stop to the joy riding.

Invention Makes Shipwreck Safe.

Gustav Heinrich, inventor of a new kind of life-saving suit, declares that it will deprive shipwreck of all its terrors. The life-saving suits at present provided are of comparatively little use in case of disaster in midocean, but it is said that a passenger furnished with one of Heinrich's devices could be thrown into the sea and live in comfort for many days while waiting to be picked up.

The apparatus is as much of a boat as it is a suit. It is made of water-tight canvas, and the person using it stands with his feet in a sort of bucket which forms the base. The canvas sleeves end in gloves, and the wearer can withdraw his arms at will. There is a porthole in the head which is closed when the weather is rough. When this is closed, air enters through a tube above the head. No water can get into the tube. The bucket base takes in a certain quantity of water, which acts as ballast, and keeps the life-saver and its occupant upright. Sufficient food and drink can be taken aboard to keep the passenger alive for a week or more.

The life-saver is also provided with a revolver, which can be fired through the porthole, and signal lights with which the passenger can appeal for help at night. Attached to the apparatus, just below the head part, are ropes by which two or three persons can keep themselves afloat.

Heinrich proposes that one suit of this kind be provided for every person on a ship. While for two years there has been a vigorous movement for insuring safety at sea, the problem of providing sufficient boats to carry all passengers has not been completely solved, and boats may be sunk or made useless from many causes.

Saw Big Log in Record Time.

Louis Poslier and Ralph Schwizky, Wisconsin lumberjacks, made a world's record at the Forest Products Exposition in Chicago by sawing through a thirty-inch cottonwood log in 1 minute and 26 seconds.

Taught by Moving Pictures.

A Pacific coast railway company is using motion pictures very successfully in connection with the instruction of its trainmen. For the most part, regular employees of the company have been used as actors, as it was found easier to make actors out of railway men than railroad men out of professional actors. In carrying out the original idea, one crew was used to depict the careless, incompetent, and negligent observation of the rules, while another crew was exhibited in the pictures as alert, competent and vigilant in its work. To complete the lesson, the incompetent crew is shown carelessly attired, with caps on one side, collars turned up, et cetera, while the second crew is neat in dress and erect in bearing. To show all the pictures requires two hours.

Among the Scientists.

Scientific tests have shown that in occupations employing the larger muscles, women tire more rapidly than men, while in work in which smaller muscles are used, they are more efficient.

The most difficult of all stains to take out are those made by coffee. With care, however, the stain can be removed from the most delicate silk or woolen fabrics. Rub the mark gently with a little pure glycerin, then rinse it in lukewarm water, lay a cloth over the damp part on the wrong side, and press with a cool iron until dry.

The diameter of wire can be ascertained when no wire gauge is at hand by wrapping it around a round object for one inch, and counting the number of coils.

To remove labels from bottles, wet the label with water and hold it over a flame for a second or two. The steam quickly penetrates the label and softens the gum or paste.

To remove rust from a knife, plunge the blade into an onion and leave it for an hour. Then polish in the usual way.

If silver is to be stored away for some time, pack it with dry flour; it will remain untarnished.

If milk be used to soften shoe polish, it will improve the gloss.

At 99 He Sticks to Trade.

St. Paul, Minn., claims it has the oldest pattern maker, and also the most active 99-year-old man in the country. Edwin Fisher is the man who has the distinction of being doubly honored. Although almost a century has passed since he was born, he works daily at his trade of pattern making for a local manufacturing company, and in the evening amuses himself by playing billiards. His ambition is to live to be 100 years old.

Works Eleven Years on Sugar-cane Harvester.

After eleven years of work, F. M. Cockrell, of New Orleans, La., has produced a successful sugar-cane harvester. His invention is said to be one of the biggest single events in the sugar-producing industry. The machine cuts, tops, and strips the cane, all this work being work which has been done by hand.

Cockrell built his first cane harvester in March, 1903. It was built in an amateurish way, crudely put together, entirely too light and fragile for the colossal task assigned it, but containing, nevertheless, the germ of an idea. During the intervening years, Cockrell has built six successive machines, one after another, tried them during the grinding season, noted their imperfections, come back the following year, only to find other unforeseen imperfections. Yet, every year he came a little nearer to the end of it. The success of the machine was demonstrated on a plantation near New Orleans, where it cut, topped, and

stripped 900-feet rows of cane in twelve minutes without a stop or interruption. The field manager said the cane would make twenty-six tons to the acre. The canes were cut wherever the chauffeur—the machine runs by its own gasoline power—wanted to cut them.

These Miners Have the Cleanest Jobs.

Did you ever hear of soap mines? There are a number of them in North America. One of the largest is in Nevada. There the natural soap, which lathers with ease, is imbedded as compactly as new clay. It is shipped out in large quantities on the Central Pacific Railroad, which runs near the mine.

A soap mine exists at Ashcroft, in British Columbia, forming the bottom and sides of a lake which contains water in which there is much borax and soda. These having solidified, the substance can be sawn out in blocks as if it were ice.

Another natural soap mine or well was discovered in South Dakota. The soap is skimmed from a boiling spring, and hardens by exposure to the air. It is like soft clay, and can be gathered with a shovel.

There are soap banks or mines on Owens Lake, in California, which for several years have been extensively used.

Wireless Rays Kills Pelican in Mid-air.

Humane Officer Mutters, of San Diego, Cal., has sent an appeal to the government to make its big wireless station at Point Loma, near San Diego, stop killing pelicans.

Pelicans used to be thick in San Diego harbor. Now there are only a few of them. Mutters is sure the powerful radio waves which the station sends out do the mischief. He says he has seen scores of birds suddenly stricken in mid-air, fall dead into the water. The waves might be toned down, he thinks, so as to do less damage.

Take Out Blood, Put it Back.

J. W. Addley, of Detroit, Mich., has just had a pint of blood drained from him, frozen for twenty-four hours by means of an acid, skimmed of germs, then heated to normal temperature, and injected into his spinal canal. After this remarkable treatment he seems to be recovering from an ailment that has resisted for fifteen months the best efforts of skilled physicians. His trouble was caused by an affection of the brain covering. Aphaic meningitis is the medical term for it—a rare disease.

Injury Takes Him to Major League.

Harry "Hi" Jasper, a young spitball pitcher, who is making good with the Chicago White Sox, became a hurler by accident. Of course, it is not unusual for baseball players to break into the game through queer freaks of chance. But Jasper's case is different from the others. It was an injury that started him to success.

While only a fair shortstop with the Dubuque, Iowa, team in 1911, Jasper was so badly injured that he figured he would never be fast enough to again play on the infield or the outfield, so he determined to become a pitcher. The next year he journeyed to Anadarko, Okla., announced that he was a hurler. He made good without any preliminary practice.

His fellow players at Dubuque had laughed when he told them he was going to make a pitcher of himself, so, in 1913, he appeared in the Iowa town and announced that he was ready to throw in the first game of the season. As an experiment in that game, he bought some slippery elm and tried the spitball for the first time. The result was that he fanned seventeen batters and allowed only one hit.

In one day he leaped into baseball fame, for major-league scouts at once hastened to watch his work. The White Sox beat all the other clubs to the young twirler, who now depends almost entirely on the spitball, although he is also the master of what he calls the "spitless spitter." It is thrown without the use of saliva. His success with this freak ball and with the "spitter" is said to be due to his hand of unusual length.

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